

Life-Sharing Series From Triage To Transformation Lesson 1 The Crisis John 5:1-15

JESUS HEALS A LAME MAN BY THE POOL / [5:1-18](#) / [42](#)

God gives salvation freely through Jesus Christ. But to receive salvation, a person must *believe*. The lame man by the pool at Bethesda had to *want* to be healed. Then Jesus approached him later to explain to him that he needed to believe and receive spiritual healing as well. God makes the offer and God performs the miracle, but we must respond to his offer and accept it.

[5:1](#) After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.^{NKJV}

Capernaum, at the northern end of Israel, was lower in altitude than Jerusalem. Because of Jerusalem's location in the mountains, and because of its priority as the city of David, people spoke of going *up to Jerusalem*. All Jewish males were required to come to Jerusalem to attend three feasts: (1) the Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread, (2) the Feast of Weeks (also called Pentecost), and (3) the Feast of Tabernacles. Though this

Jesus Teaches in Jerusalem.

Between [chapters 4](#) and [5](#) of John, Jesus ministered throughout Galilee, especially in Capernaum. He had been calling certain men to follow him, but it wasn't until after this trip to Jerusalem ([5:1](#)) that he chose his twelve disciples from among them.

particular feast is not specified, the phrase explains why Jesus was in Jerusalem. John added the expression of *the Jews* to help Gentile readers.

5:2 Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool.^{NRSV} This is how most translators render the Greek. A few other translations render it this way: "Now at the Sheep-Pool in Jerusalem there is a place . . ." (NEB; see also NJB). Readers familiar with Jerusalem would have known that John was referring to the Sheep Gate (it is mentioned in [Nehemiah 3:1, 32; 12:39](#)). Recent excavations show that this site had two pools with **five covered colonnades**^{NIV}. These were open structures with roofs that allowed some protection from the weather.

5:3-4 Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.^{NIV} The multitude of sick people lay underneath the five colonnades. In modern times similar gatherings have happened in Fatima and Lourdes. Many people make pilgrimages to these sites to receive the healing benefit of the waters. The colonnade in Jerusalem was a place of collected human suffering—people attracted by a faint hope of being healed. To this place Jesus was also attracted, offering with his presence the kind of healing that went beyond the physical needs of the disabled.

Waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.^{NKJV} It is very doubtful this portion was written by John, since it is not found in the earliest manuscripts, and where it does occur in later manuscripts, it is often marked in such a way as to show that it is an addition. The passage was probably inserted later by scribes who felt it necessary to provide an explanation for the gathering of disabled people and the stirring of the water mentioned in [verse 7](#). It is unclear whether an angel actually disturbed the water, or if this was just a local superstition used to explain the natural movement in a pool of water fed by a spring. But somehow the waters were stirred and seemed to have had curative powers.

HURT, HOPE, AND HELP

After thirty-eight years, this man's problem had become a way of life. No one had ever helped him. He had no hope of ever being healed and no desire to help himself. The man was paralyzed in sight of healing. His situation looked hopeless; that is, until the day that Jesus made his way through the crowd. Among all those trying to be healed, Jesus found the one who couldn't help himself.

No matter how trapped you feel in your infirmities, God can minister to your deepest needs. Don't let a problem or hardship cause you to lose hope. God may have special work for you to do in spite of your condition, or even because of it. Many have ministered more effectively to hurting people because they have triumphed over their own hurts.

5:5-8 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time.^{NKJV} This gives us a glimpse into the extent of Jesus' knowledge. Jesus knew this man's condition and how long he had suffered (he was **an invalid for thirty-eight years**).^{NIV}

Jesus asked, "**Do you want to be made well?**"^{NRSV} Jesus' question shows us that he will not force himself upon anyone. He seeks permission before intervening in that person's life.

Standing before a man whose desperate need was so apparent, Jesus asked an embarrassingly obvious question, "*Do you want to be made well?*" Usually these questions didn't lead to immediate explanations. In this case, Jesus waited until later to explain to the man the spiritual aspects of his sickness ([5:14](#)).

We must acknowledge our dependency and decide if we want Christ to heal us. Jesus wants more than to make some "minor" corrections in our lives—he offers radical transformation ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). Only when we admit our need will we receive the amazing power of his grace and the miracle of salvation and eternal life.

"I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred."^{NIV} The man indirectly answered Jesus by telling how he had not been able to be healed because others would get into the water before he did. But in making this statement, the man admitted that he needed help. His hope for healing was stuck behind his hopelessness of ever having help to get to the water in time.

LIFE APPLICATION

BOTTOMED OUT

The paralyzed man had one important trait that many people lack: He knew he

needed help. Not only was he unable to help himself, he also hadn't been able to persuade anyone else to help him. Apparently the religious leaders who were so quick to judge his failure to keep their Sabbath laws had not been nearly as quick to obey God's clear Old Testament commands about helping those in need.

In contrast, we are surrounded with so many supports and buffers that we may live without ever facing our inability to save ourselves. Jesus didn't choose the ones who were pushing forward; rather, he went directly to the person who had almost given up hope. He went to a desperate person who didn't have to be convinced he needed help. The paralyzed man had reached the end of his rope and was ready to respond. Does God have to wait until we are desperate before he hears from us?

Jesus offered help, but not the kind of help the man expected. Jesus simply said, "**Rise, take up your bed and walk.**"^{NKJV} And the man responded immediately.

5:9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.^{NIV} The action of carrying his mat represented this man's freedom and became the occasion for others to impose limitations. This miracle should have revealed to the Jews in Jerusalem that the Messiah was finally present, for Isaiah had prophesied, "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy" ([Isaiah 35:5-6](#) NIV). Instead, they chose to focus on another issue: **The day on which this took place was a Sabbath.**^{NIV} Presumably, if the waters had been stirred on the Sabbath and he had been healed by getting in, the Jews would not have argued against his healing. But these religious leaders would not allow God in the flesh to break their rules by healing this man directly. We wonder how anyone could be so closed to God's working. But how often do our preconceived notions of how God's work should be done get in the way of it getting done!

See Also:

[Chart: Seven Sabbath Miracles](#)

LIFE APPLICATION

BUILDING BRIDGES

Most people would rather avoid seeing and speaking to people with disabilities. It's easier to politely ignore someone in a wheelchair at a mall, or a child who

struggles just to walk. But notice what Jesus did in this story:

He went to the place. Jesus could have entered Jerusalem by another gate. He could have avoided walking by the pool called Bethesda. Just as Jesus went to the pool, so the church should go to where people with disabilities are. It's not enough to open the church doors and wait to see who enters. Ministry in the disabled community must be outreach-oriented to be effective.

He talked with the person. Jesus spoke to the man directly. He demonstrated respect and concern, not pity. We can sometimes feel uncomfortable around people with disabilities. We may be afraid of saying the wrong thing, so we choose to say nothing at all. But guided by love, we can build bridges with disabled people by simply demonstrating common courtesy and respecting human dignity. God can help us overcome our fears so that we can ask questions and have a conversation.

He offered specific help at a point of need. Jesus healed the man—something we are unable to do. But we can pray for people, refer them to competent, professional care, and offer to help at a point of need. Specific offers are usually more well received than general ones. If we say, "Be sure to give me a call if there is anything I can do," we usually won't get a call. People who are struggling with a handicap don't want to bother anyone. Besides, how do they know we really mean what we say? Specific offers of help are better, such as: "Would you like me to drive you to the store on Tuesday?" or "Could I help you with some housecleaning on Saturday?"

Like Jesus, the church should demonstrate compassion to people with disabilities of all kinds. Of all the help we offer, the most important is to point people to Christ, who will one day heal all disabilities and remove all handicaps from his people.

5:10 So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, "It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat."^{NRSV}

There is nothing in God's law to prohibit a person from carrying a mat on the Sabbath. God's law says: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work" ([Exodus 20:8-10](#) NKJV). Carrying a mat on the Sabbath did not break any Old Testament law; instead, it broke the Pharisees' legalistic application of God's command.

The regulation against carrying something on the Sabbath was the last of thirty-nine rules in the "tradition of the elders" that stipulated the kinds of work prohibited on the Sabbath. This was just one of hundreds of rules the Jewish leaders had added to the Old Testament law.

Poor human reason when it trusts in itself substitutes the strangest absurdities for the highest divine concepts.

John Chrysostom

We must not take the mind-set of the Pharisees in our church practice. But some still rely on "oral traditions" or "principles handed down" that don't come from Scripture. Such legislature can hinder true service to God. The Bible does not stipulate what we can't do on Sunday; it does not dictate the denomination we worship in; it does not specify the kind of Christian music we use to worship God. Where the Bible does not specify rules, we should not either.

LIFE APPLICATION

IN A BIND

Although God's truth is timeless, our application of that truth may be limited by time and circumstance. The authority of an application depends on how nearly it conveys the intended truth of Scripture. Application based on personal convictions may help a person, but it becomes tyrannical if made binding on everyone. In this case, God's command to keep the Sabbath holy was still in force, but the application of avoiding certain work activities was clearly secondary to healing a person. As Jesus said at another Sabbath healing, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" ([Luke 13:15-16](#) NIV).

[5:11-13](#) "The man who made me well said . . ." The man who was healed had no idea who it was.^{NIV} In this exchange between the man who was healed and the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, the man said he didn't know who had healed him. The man's ignorance is quite possible, for Jesus had not identified himself and had immediately **slipped away into the crowd.**^{NIV} At the same time, however, the healed man seemed to be more eager to blame the healer for having him walk around with his mat than to shout about his healing. The man should have found out who healed him.

When God touches our body to heal us, we must not be so preoccupied with the miracle or even the relief from pain that we neglect to seek him out, thank him, and believe in him.

LIFE APPLICATION

DON'T TRIP!

A man who hadn't walked for thirty-eight years was healed, but the Pharisees

were more concerned about their petty rules than the life and health of a human being. It is easy to get so caught up in our man-made structures and rules that we forget the people involved. Are our guidelines for living God-made or man-made? Are they helping people, or have they become needless stumbling blocks?

5:14-15 Later Jesus found him in the temple.^{NRSV} Perhaps the man had gone there to give thanks to God for his healing. When Jesus found him, he told him, "**Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.**"^{NRSV} This statement leads to the conclusion that the man's sickness was in some way caused by sin.

This does not contradict what Jesus said in [9:3](#) about the man born blind because Jesus did not say the blind man never sinned; rather, he was pointing out that sin had not caused his blindness. One of the results of sin is suffering, but not all suffering is the result of personal sin.

I believe that no man is ever condemned for any sin except one—that he will not leave his sins and come out of them, and be the child of Him who is his Father.

George Macdonald

In this case, Jesus sought out the healed man to warn him that though he was healed physically, his thirty-eight years as an invalid would be nothing compared to something *worse*—that is, eternity in hell. The man needed to stop sinning and come to salvation in Christ. He had been lame, but now he could walk. This was a great miracle. But he needed an even greater miracle—to have his sins forgiven. The man was delighted to be physically healed, but he had to turn from his sins and seek God's forgiveness to be spiritually healed.

LIFE APPLICATION

WHAT SIN?

What was this paralyzed man's sin that Jesus now told him to stop? Was it some kind of unhealthy behavior that had directly caused his paralysis? Was it the sin of unbelief? Was it the sin of ingratitude? Or was Jesus using the man's past illness to warn him about the dangers of falling into sin? None of these possibilities provide an absolute answer. Beyond all these questions is Jesus' warning that continuing in sin eventually leads to something worse. The various benefits of God's grace, including physical healing, must be followed by repentance and growing commitment to him. Many people focus on their physical well-being while completely neglecting the health of their souls.

After this encounter, the man told the Jewish leaders what he could not tell them before: **It was Jesus who had made him well.**^{NRSV} This report triggered the Jews' persecution of Jesus—a persecution that continued from that day onward. And why did they persecute Jesus so vehemently? John proceeds to give us the answer in [verse 18](#).

5:16 Because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him.^{NIV} The Jewish leaders were faced with a mighty miracle of healing and a broken rule. They threw the miracle aside as they focused their attention on the broken rule. As is common with those who assume authority that is not rightfully theirs, these leaders instinctively felt their power threatened by Jesus' actions, thus they resented him. John traced their subsequent efforts to humiliate, harass, and kill Jesus back to this conflict over who was in charge of the Sabbath.

5:17 "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."^{NIV} With this statement Jesus challenged the notion that God himself was somehow literally subject to the Sabbath rules.

If God stopped every kind of work on the Sabbath, nature would fall into chaos and sin would overrun the world. [Genesis 2:2](#) says that God rested on the seventh day; he rested from the work of creation but began the work of sustaining the creation. God has been at work and continues to work; so does his Son, Jesus. With this claim, Jesus affirmed his equality with God (see comments on [5:18](#)). Furthermore, Jesus was teaching that when the opportunity to do good presents itself, it should not be ignored, even on the Sabbath.

Sabbath—Uncluttered time and space to distance ourselves from the frenzy of our own activities so we can see what God has been and is doing. If we do not quit work for one day a week we take ourselves far too seriously. *Sabbath-keeping*—Quieting the internal noise so we hear the still small voice of our Lord. Removing the distractions of pride so we discern the presence of Christ.

Eugene H. Peterson

LIFE APPLICATION

SABBATH KEEPING

Two significant principles come to us from the Bible regarding the Sabbath. By Jesus' declaration ([Matthew 5:17-20](#)), the fourth commandment (along with God's other commands) is still in force: "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" ([Exodus 20:8](#) NIV). But Jesus gave helpful guidelines in applying the commandments (see [Matthew 5:1–7:29](#)—much of the Sermon on the Mount is

Jesus' application of God's commands). In the case of Sabbath keeping he said, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath" ([Mark 2:27](#) NRSV). Jesus did not release us from keeping the Sabbath; he challenged us to keep it in the right way by setting down our work, consciously taking time for rest, and understanding that God has a place in our work and our rest, which makes them both holy.

When you keep the Sabbath, consider the answers to the following questions:

I When I work, am I working for God?

I When I rest, am I resting for God?

I Does my "resting" refresh me for work?

I How does my time of rest include devotion to God?

I How well do I understand the fact that one person's "work" is another person's "rest"? (For example, some might find tending a rose garden tedious work, while others find it a joyful, restful act of worship.)

5:18 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.^{NKJV} The Jews realized that Jesus' words revealed his very personal relationship with God. In saying, "My Father," he was clearly claiming to be God's Son, thus *equal with God*. For a human to claim equality with God was blasphemy; and blasphemy was a sin carrying the death penalty ([Leviticus 24:15-16](#)). People regularly misunderstood Jesus, and he was constantly correcting them. Jesus never attempted to correct the understanding that he was claiming to be God, for that was exactly what he meant. Thus the Jewish leaders sought to accuse Jesus and have him killed.

LIFE APPLICATION

UNDERSTANDING THE HATE

To understand the hate that Jesus received from some of his own people, we must examine the larger political picture. The Roman rule over the Jews placed severe limits on most power and control exercised by native peoples. But the Romans made an important exception in matters of religion. The Romans, with their pluralistic views of religion, interpreted the religious sphere as little more than local, meaningless activity to help keep the masses under control. However, their relaxed philosophy of religion ran into serious difficulties when applied to the monotheistic Jews.

Among the Jews of Jesus' time, the highest power someone could wield was in the religious structure. The authorities Jesus confronted had worked hard to obtain and maintain their positions of prestige and power. To the Romans, their squabbles seemed trivial, but among the Jews, religious issues, whether

politicized or not, were matters of life and death.

Into this arena stepped Jesus, challenging the legitimacy of the religious leadership, exposing their false pretenses, and claiming a higher authority. To those in power, his credentials were unacceptable:

| Jesus was an outsider and not from their ranks.

| Jesus was reputedly a Galilean, considered worthy of little respect.

| Jesus was young and his training was suspect.

| Jesus spoke with uncompromising clarity and authority.

| Jesus had a startling way of cutting through the technicalities of the law that preserved the position of the hierarchy.

Threatened by the loss of power if Jesus' claims were true, the religious leaders chose to reject him. When unable to discredit him, they attempted to dispose of him. But God used their attempted solution to the "Jesus problem" to solve once and for all the entire world's "sin problem."

Life-Sharing Series From Triage To Transformation Lesson 1 The Crisis John 5:1-15

1. Has there ever been a time when you had wanted to be sicker just a little longer, if so why?

Once in school, I wanted to avoid something at school and I was hoping my not feeling well would last just one more day so I would not have to go to school the next day.

2. Why should we not assume that everyone wants to get well?

Being well means that you have to take responsibility for yourself. Not everybody wants to be responsible. Many people prefer to have others look after them. Some people use their weakness or illness as a way to control others.

John 5:1-15 (NIV) ¹ Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. ² Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. ³ Here a great number of disabled people used to lie--the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.

⁴ **(John 5:4 (NASB77))**

⁴ for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.]) ⁵ One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" ⁷ "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." ⁸ Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk."

⁹ At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, ¹⁰ and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat." ¹¹ But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'" ¹² So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?" ¹³ The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. ¹⁴ Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop

sinning or something worse may happen to you." ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

3. Why are the people hanging around the Pool of Bethesda?

The people are desperate for a miracle to change their situation. They know they can't make themselves well. They have placed their hope in this legend that if they get to the waters first after the waters are stirred, they would be healed. Noone knew what day or what time the waters might be stirred or even how often they would be stirred. So the people were hanging out there just in case. Notice the bible does not say the waters had some kind of healing power. It only reports on the event of what people believed. It is likely though that with so many people hanging around the pool, there were people being healed at the pool.

4. Why is verse 4 missing from some translations?

The goal of bible translators is to give us the most accurate bible as possible. Through archeology we have been able to find older manuscripts of Scriptures than were available to scholars back in the 1500 and 1600 when the English bible was produced. Those scholars included this verse 4. But since older manuscripts have been found that do not have verse 4, verse 4 is omitted in many of today's modern translations. Keep in mind verse four does not add any doctrine to what we believe about God or about the work of Jesus Christ.

^{NKJV} It is very doubtful this portion was written by John, since it is not found in the earliest manuscripts, and where it does occur in later manuscripts, it is often marked in such a way as to show that it is an addition. The passage was probably inserted later by scribes who felt it necessary to provide an explanation for the gathering of disabled people and the stirring of the water mentioned in [verse 7](#). It is unclear whether an angel actually disturbed the water, or if this was just a local superstition used to explain the natural movement in a pool of water fed by a spring. But somehow the waters were stirred and seemed to have had curative powers.

5. How long had this man been at the pool, and how did he get there?

We know the many had been ill for 38 years but we don't know how long he was at the pool. We do know he had been coming there for a long while. More likely than not, the man probably had someone bring him to the pool, leave him there for the day, and pick him up later in the evening.

6. Why do you think Jesus did not attempt to engage all of the people at the pool and heal them all at once?

Jesus did not come to simply heal people in dramatic fashion. Jesus knew that miracles changed people's bodies, but did not always change their souls. He had compassion on people, but his primary goal was to get his message into the hearts of people and to turn them toward God. If Jesus had done a mass miracle, it would have made his mission much more difficult. In the next chapter after he feeds 5000, it makes for a touchy situation. The Scriptures said John 6:14-15 (NIV) ¹⁴ After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." ¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. If Jesus had healed all the people in Jerusalem at once, they would have tried to make him king. Jesus was not interested in being declared a king in this world. When Jesus does heal large groups of people at once, it's always in the smaller villages or out in the countryside. It does not take place in Jerusalem.

7. Why does Jesus ask this man if he wants to get well?

Jesus presents the man with a choice. Jesus knows that if this man is healed, things about his life are going to change. He does not impose himself into this man's life. He also wants the man to take some responsibility in advance for the healing Jesus desires to do in Him.

8. What is strange and disappointing about the man's response to Jesus' question?

The man does not respond with an enthusiastic yes or even say something like "I'd do just about anything for the chance to be healed." Instead the man give reasons for why he has not been healed. The ironic thing is that, if what he says is true, then why is he still waiting at the pool. He was in no better chance of getting to the stirring of the waters today, than he was the last time there had been a stirring.

9. When have you tried to help someone that did not want to be helped, and what ended up happening?

We once tried to help a young man get his life together. We gave him a room in our house and fed him for a while. He told us he was a Christian, and how another pastor had tried to misuse him. He had talked about wanting to grow in God and we wanted to help him grow. Some incident came up weeks later, and we asked him to leave. In cleaning up his room, we found several empty colt45 bottles under his bed. We thought we were helping him, when in fact we were enabling him to continue living a double life-style.

10. Why do you think Jesus tells this man to do something that will obviously get him into trouble?

When Jesus tells the man to take up his mat and walk, Jesus was actually testing the man's faith and the man's desire to be healed. Jesus was not asking the man to violate the Sabbath, because there was nothing in Scripture that forbid it. It was a rule of the Pharisees of what could and could not be done on the Sabbath. Carrying a mat on the Sabbath did not break any Old Testament law; instead, it broke the Pharisees' legalistic application of God's command. The regulation against carrying something on the Sabbath was the last of thirty-nine rules in the "tradition of the elders" that stipulated the kinds of work prohibited on the Sabbath. This was just one of hundreds of rules the Jewish leaders had added to the Old Testament law.

11. What might Jesus ask us to do that will get us in trouble?

When we come to know Jesus, we need to recognize that an unintended consequence of following Jesus, is a persecution from the world. Living for Christ invites persecution and difficulty into our lives. John 15:18-20 (NIV)
¹⁸ "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. ²⁰
 Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

11 a. When Jesus ask us things, are we more likely to respond with an enthusiastic yes, or offer excuses why it has not happened?

I think we are at times a lot like this man at the pool. We want to see the change, but we're not sure we want to pay the price to get it. We want better relationships with others, but we don't want to apologize, we don't want to forgive, and we don't want to humble ourselves especially if we think we are right in the way we feel. Sometimes we don't do things because of fear of the relationships we might lose if we do what Jesus asks. We may not recognize it, but everyday we are being asked to make choices for Jesus.

12. Why are the people so upset over the man being healed on the Sabbath? Do you think they would have rejected the healing had it been done to them or one that they loved? Why or Why not?

The Pharisees actually believed they were defending the honor of God by coming up with rules for what a person could and could not do on the Sabbath. They so exalted the rules, that they could not see how the people were being affected by them. I think if they or one of their loved ones had been healed on the Sabbath, they would have seen the healing as a gift or blessing from God. Sometimes we come up with rules and traditions that push people further from the grace of God rather than bringing them closer to God. We create rules around a room to make it holy and then forget the purpose of the room and focus on the rules. For instance, we declare the sanctuary a holy place and make a rule that no coffee is to be brought into the sanctuary. Is the purpose of the rule to avoid coffee spills on the carpet and pew cushions, or to keep the sanctuary a holy place. If a guest walks in with a cup of coffee with the desire to get to know Jesus, what do we see first 1) the coffee cup or the person coming to find out about Jesus. There is no Scripture on coffee in the sanctuary, in part because the early church did not have sanctuaries. They met in people's homes.

13. What does the man's response to the questions about carrying his mat reveal about his character?

The man is not willing to take responsibility for his actions. He should have given a testimony to them of how he had been healed and asked them, couldn't they understand why he had his mat. Instead he tells them they should be looking for the guy who told him to carry the mat.

14. Why do we sometime give evasive answers to questions about Jesus?

Sometimes we don't want to be rejected by others. Sometimes we are afraid of what is going to happen if we seem too narrow minded. A question like "Do you believe Jesus is the only way to God?" becomes a test of how loving and kind you are. We forget that we as Christians did not say Jesus was the only way to God. It was Jesus who said, John 14:6 (NIV) ⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

15. What causes this man to betray Jesus?

The moment the man is rebuked by Jesus for sinning, is the moment the man turns against Jesus. So often it is not that we no longer believe in God that turns us out of the church. It is that we make the choice to follow a pathway of sin and that's what really turns us against Jesus. This man deliberately tried to get Jesus into trouble with the authorities. Although Jesus had had compassion on Him, he did not have any compassion for Jesus. I can imagine he was a part of the crowd that was yelling Crucify him at Jesus' trial.

16. Do you think this man was made well?

Absolutely Not.

Life-Sharing Series From Triage To Transformation Lesson 2 The Emergency Room Mark 1:40-45

1:40 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."^{NIV} Leprosy was a terrifying disease because of the social rejection and the devastating impact it had on its victims. And it was incurable. In Jesus' day, the Greek word for leprosy was used for a variety of similar diseases; some forms were contagious, disfiguring, and/or deadly; some were as innocuous as ringworm. In keeping with the law in [Leviticus 13](#) and [14](#), Jewish leaders declared people with leprosy (lepers) unclean. This meant that lepers were unfit to participate in any religious or social activity. Because the law said that contact with any unclean person made that person unclean too, some people even threw rocks at lepers to keep them at a safe distance. Even the mention of the name of this disabling disease terrified people because they were afraid of catching it. Lepers lived together in colonies outside their community. Most would remain there until they died. Sometimes, however, leprosy would go away. Then the person could return to the priest and ask to be declared "clean" before returning to the community.

The chief of sinners may yet be brought near to God by the blood and Spirit of Christ. People are not lost because they are too bad to be saved, but because they will not come to Christ so that he may save them.

J. C. Ryle

That this man with leprosy *came to* Jesus reveals the man's great courage; his begging on his knees reveals his desperation and his humility; his words to Jesus reveal his faith. The priest would declare him clean, but only Jesus could make him clean. "*If you are willing*" reveals the man's faith in Jesus' authority in this matter of healing; Jesus' ability was never in question. What this man wanted was to be made *clean*, a huge request. The man wanted to become a person again, to be reunited with his family and community. He knew Jesus could do it. The question was, would he?

LIFE APPLICATION

A DEADLY DISEASE

Like leprosy, sin is deadly—and we all have it. Only Christ's healing touch can miraculously take away our sins and restore us to real living. But first, just like the leper, we must realize our inability to cure ourselves and ask for Christ's

saving help.

1:41 Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.^{NIV} Jesus' love and power go hand in hand. Mark revealed Jesus' heart of compassion. While all people shunned lepers, Jesus *reached out his hand and touched* this man covered with a dreaded, contagious disease. The fact that Jesus' touch precedes his pronouncement of healing indicates that Jesus disregarded the Jewish law not to touch a leper ([Leviticus 5:3](#); [13:1-46](#); [Numbers 5:2](#)). This shows Jesus' compassion and his authority over the law.

"I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"^{NIV} Whether lepers had been cleansed prior to this in Jesus' ministry is unrecorded; certainly none were cured in Capernaum, for they would not have been allowed into the town among the crowds. Jesus was probably walking between towns when this man approached him. Mark recorded Jesus healing of various sicknesses and the casting out of demons; here he recorded Jesus compassionately healing a man with a humanly incurable disease. Jesus showed himself both willing and able to meet this man's most basic need. With the words *Be clean!* the leprosy immediately disappeared. The words were simple but effective, revealing Jesus' divine authority over sickness.

1:42 Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.^{NRSV} We are not told the stage of this man's leprosy—he may already have lost portions of his body to the disease. But when Jesus spoke, the man's health was restored completely. The disease did not go into a type of "remission"—it was gone. The man's becoming *clean* meant he had his life back. He could return to his community, to his family, and to worshiping in the synagogue.

LIFE APPLICATION

TRUE VALUE

The real value of a person is inside, not outside. Although a person's body may be diseased or deformed, the person inside is no less valuable to God. No person is too disgusting for God's touch. In a sense, we are all people with leprosy because we have all been deformed by the ugliness of sin. But God, by sending his Son, Jesus, has touched us, giving us the opportunity to be healed. When you feel repulsed by someone, stop and remember how God feels about that person—and about you.

1:43-44 Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: "See that you don't tell this to anyone."^{NIV} One of the key points in Mark's Gospel is that nothing could

deter Jesus from his mission, nor from the urgency of it. Jesus' ministry was to preach the Good News of the kingdom of God—not just to heal people. Jesus always had compassion and did miracles to help those in need, not in order to become wealthy or famous. Thus this man, who probably met him along the road between towns, asked for and received healing. But Jesus *sent him away*. The Greek word for "sent away" literally means "to throw out." Jesus was concerned that the man go immediately and fulfill the law.

"Go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."^{NIV} When a leper was cured, he or she had to go to a priest to be examined. Then the leper was to give a thank offering at the temple. Jesus adhered to these laws by sending the man to the priest, thereby demonstrating Jesus' complete regard for God's law. Jesus wanted this man to give his story firsthand to the priest to prove that his leprosy was completely gone so that he could be restored to his family and community. This would be done *as a testimony to them*.

There is debate as to the identification of "them." Some think "them" refers to the priests, not the people who witnessed the healing. People who take this view argue that when the man presented himself to the priest, the priest would have to declare that the man was healed, and the sacrifice would be living proof. Thus, if the priest declared that the healing had taken place but refused to accept the person and power of Christ who had done it, the priest would be self-condemned by the evidence. The word "testimony" is used in [6:11](#) and [13:9](#) in this negative sense and implies that the evidence would testify against them on Judgment Day.

On the other hand, there has been no mention yet of priests or of Jesus' challenge to them, so it seems more likely that Jesus intended the testimony to be a positive one to the people. Jesus' meaning would be, "Don't you proclaim it, but let the priest's pronouncement witness for me and for the healing." It would testify to everyone that the man had recovered, that Jesus did not condemn the law, and, most important, that the one who heals lepers had come.

Jesus also gave the man *a strong warning*: "*See that you don't tell this to anyone.*" The warning was an earnest and forceful admonition—words Jesus commanded the man to obey. But why would Jesus ask this man not to tell anyone about his healing? Wouldn't this have been great advertising for Jesus, bringing more people to hear his message? While we might think so, Jesus knew better ([John 2:24-25](#)). Jesus' mission, as stated above, was to preach the Good News of the kingdom of God. If crowds descended on him to see miracles accomplished or to benefit from his power, they would not be coming with the heart attitude needed to hear and respond to the gospel. Jesus did not want to be a miracle worker in a sideshow; he wanted to be the Savior of their souls.

[1:45](#) Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news.^{NIV} The man disobeyed Jesus' strong warning. Perhaps the man thought he was helping Jesus'

ministry; perhaps he just couldn't help himself. In any case, he talked freely and constantly (the Greek verb is in the present tense, speaking of continuous talking and spreading the news of his healing). His disobedience to Jesus' command, even if from good motives, hindered Jesus' work because the publicity Jesus received severely hampered his ministry in the synagogue. Mark doesn't say, but the man also might have disobeyed Jesus' command to go to the priest to be declared clean. This would have flamed the jealousy many religious leaders already felt toward Jesus, who seemed to be working against them by his authoritative preaching and growing popularity.

As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places.^{NIV} Jesus had planned to go into towns throughout Galilee and preach in the synagogues. But his notoriety as a healer made this impossible. Mark recorded that Jesus couldn't enter any town openly—probably crowds of people pressed on him, all seeking special favors. There was no openness to Jesus' message under such conditions. So Jesus *stayed outside in lonely places*, that is, in the wilderness.

Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.^{NIV} But the wilderness did not hinder people in need of healing or desiring to see this healer. They "came" (the Greek verb is imperfect, meaning they kept on coming) *from everywhere*.

Life-Sharing Series From Triage To Transformation Lesson 2 The Emergency Room Mark 1:40-45

1. What was your last experience like for you at the emergency room?

I had taken someone else to the emergency room. I remember we spent time waiting for the them to call our name after registering. We knew we would be seen, we just didn't know when or how many people were ahead of us.

2. What would it be like to go to the emergency room and not know whether or not they were going to be willing to treat you or not?

That would be a frightening experience to know that you could have come all this way and be turned away, especially if they had the wisdom and medicine to help you out. I think there would be a lot of prayer on my part for mercy on the way to the emergency room. My mom once went to emergency for a severe toothache that was causing her a lot of pain. This was in the 60's in the south. The lady told her that she would have to go to the colored window before they would consider helping her. She decided to simply go home and take her pain with her.

"Unclean! Unclean!" the man shouted, and everyone scattered to avoid contact with the leper—everyone except Jesus.

The religious wisdom of the day demanded that a holy man keep away from the common people, the "sinners." So Jesus was bound to encounter resistance as he openly welcomed them. This passage focuses on Christ's compassion toward those we normally avoid.

LifeGuide Bible Studies - Mark: Follow Me.

Mark 1:40-45 (NIV)

⁴⁰ A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." ⁴¹ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

⁴³ Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ⁴⁴ "See that you don't tell this to

anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." ⁴⁵ Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

3. [Leviticus 13:45-46](#) states that a leper "must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp." How then would this disease have affected the man psychologically, religiously and socially?

The man would have led a lonely and somewhat isolated existence. His closest friends would have been other lepers who did not mind his touch. He could not be involved in the everyday affairs of his family. He could not enter the synagogue. He was not invited to any affairs taking place in the village. This disease robbed this man of the life he so desired to have.

4. Describe how you think this man was physically coming to Jesus? What risks are involved in his approaching Jesus?

I think this man was probably running to get to Jesus. If he walked too slowly and was identified as a leper, others may have tried to have prevented him from getting to Jesus. Somehow he had heard about Jesus even without being able to enter the towns. He probably was praying that Jesus would have compassion on him. The man risked being attacked by those with Jesus to keep him from defiling Jesus by touching Jesus. He risked being rejected by Jesus. Many people believed that sickness and disease were often the result of sin in a person's life. The man could have been afraid that Jesus would point out some sin in his life.

4a. Why do you think the man is confident that Jesus could heal him, if Jesus was willing?

Jesus was this man's last and only hope. The man obviously had heard the stories of Jesus having authority over demons by casting them out and he heard of the many sick people who had been brought to Jesus and healed. If Jesus

had authority over both the spiritual and natural world, the man knew that his condition had to fall somewhere in between the two. He may not have known exactly who Jesus was, but he did know that Jesus had supernatural power.

5. What risk is involved in Jesus coming near to the leper?

Jesus would make himself unclean by touching the leper. This could cause some people to want to avoid contact with Jesus, because Jesus would be making them unclean. Jesus' reputation with the religious leaders would also be called into question. If word spread that Jesus had touched a leper, then Jesus would not be welcomed into the synagogues until after Jesus went through all the steps required to be made clean again. Jesus puts his reputation on the line by touching the man, before healing the man.

5a. When may we have to lay down our reputations in order to be obedient to God?

We resent or even fear people looking at us as one of those religious fanatics. We may be in a situation with something that seem small to others, but we need to take a stand on in order to be obedient to God. People may call us names or make fun of us for the stand, but we still need to do it. We can't always just go along with the crowd to have the same privileges they have. Everybody may like us as being nice and easy to get along with, until they find out that we are opposed to things like abortion, homosexuality, adultery, and faking time cards for others.

6. What risk is involved we approach Jesus for help in our situations.

Jesus may require something of us in return for our healing to be made complete. Jesus may insist that we let go of something we do not want to let go of or to pick up something that we do not want to pick up. Our desire may be for Jesus to lift us out of a situation, when Jesus' desire is to walk with us through

the situation. We risk finding out that we may not be as committed to God as we had thought we were.

7. What does it say to you about Jesus, in that Jesus touched the man, before he healed the man? What does a touch communicate?

Jesus had a heart for compassion. He accepted people where they were in order to give them the power to be changed to what God was calling them to be. There is nothing about any of us, that will keep Jesus from reaching out to touch us. If Jesus did not consider anyone beneath his touch, why do we think we are better or more holy than others by refusing to offer the same kind of touch. The Scriptures do not say that Jesus first put on gloves and touched the man. A touch indicates a willingness to become one with another person on some sort of level.

8. How do you feel about touching people who come to our feeding program who do not always look that great? What about people visiting our church during the greet time or during coffee hour?

I find myself intentionally reaching out to touch others so that they will sense they've been accepted by me. Only one in about 25 people shy away from being touched.

9. Describe the last time you experienced God's compassion in your life?

At Presbytery meeting last week, I had gotten up and spoken against an overture allowing pastors to perform same sex marriages. The overture passed by a vote of 83 to 18. After the vote, One person I did not know from a church I did not expect, came to me and said, "I want you to be encouraged. I know you may feel like a voice crying in the wilderness, but keep standing up for your convictions." I felt as though God was removing some of the feelings of rejection I was going through, by speaking compassionately to me, through this anonymous person.

10. Does God's compassion mean that God is always willing to heal our bodies or to change our situations?

No. Compassion means that God is with us in the midst of what we're going through and God is looking out for us as we endure the experience. God is more than willing to provide us with what we need to get us beyond where we are.

11. Why do you think the man disobeyed Jesus' order not to tell anyone until after a priest had examined him and he had paid the necessary offering?

It's possible the man was so overjoyed with his own situation, that he did not think clearly through what Jesus had asked him to do.

It's also possible that the man did not think it was necessary to follow through with what Jesus had said, because after all, anyone looking at him could see that he was not the same person as before.

It's also possible the man did not want to go through the trouble of finding a priest and paying the offering that was due. There were other things he may have wanted to get done first.

12. How was Jesus' ministry cut short by the man's actions of sharing the miracle of what God had done?

- ***Jesus could not enter towns openly to teach and to preach***
- ***People were coming to Jesus to get miracles, not to hear His message***
- ***Religious leaders may have begun to accuse Jesus of disregarding the law concerning the issue of leprosy***

13. How can our desire to do good, be a hindrance to the kingdom of God?

It's easy for us to think our way or serving God or worshipping God is the best way to do it, and we want everyone else to come over to seeing it our way. Our intention may be good, but it may cause more friction in the body of Christ,

which hinders about ability to love one another. We lose sight of the reality that it's not by our programs, our worship style, or our form of music that shows we are Christ's disciples, but our ability to love one another.

14. Did this man leave Jesus "well."

I think he had a physical healing that lasted, but I don't think he left well, because he didn't leave determined to do what Jesus had asked him to do.

Life-Sharing Series From Triage To Transformation Lesson 3 The Intensive Care Unit (ICU) 2 Chronicles 26:15-23

Uzziah the prosperous.

I. A YOUTHFUL SOVEREIGN. (Vers. 1-3.)

1. *His names.* Uzziah, “Might of Jehovah” ([2 Kings 15:13](#), [30](#), [32](#), [34](#); [Isaiah 1:1](#); [6:1](#); [Amos 1:1](#); [Zechariah 14:5](#)); Azariah, “Whom Jehovah aids” ([2 Kings 14:21](#); [15:1](#), [6](#), [8](#), [17](#), [23](#), [27](#); [1 Chronicles 3:12](#)); — the former, the designation taken by or conferred upon him at or soon after his accession (Thenius, Bahr); the latter, his name before that event. But if the two appellations should not be regarded as equivalent (Keil), the likelihood is that Uzziah was his personal and Azariah his kingly title (Nagelsbach in Herzog, and Kleinert in Riehm), as the latter, *Azri-jahu*, is the name he ordinarily bears on the Assyrian monuments (Schrader, ‘Keilin-schriften,’ p. 217).

2. *His parents.* Amaziah the son of Joash, and Jecoliah of Jerusalem. Of the latter nothing is known beyond her name and residence, except that she had been the wife, and was the mother, of a king. That Uzziah was not his father's firstborn son has been inferred (Bertheau, Ewald, Bahr), though precariously, from the statement that “all the people took him and made him king” (ver. 1).

3. *The date of his accession.* After his father's death, in the fifteenth year of Jeroboam II. of Israel ([2 Kings 14:23](#)). The theory that Uzziah's accession should be dated from his father's capture by Joash (Sumner) is not without support from certain circumstances stated in the narrative, as e.g. that Amaziah *lived* (not reigned) after the death of Joash fifteen years ([2Ch. 25:25](#)), and that Uzziah built Eloth after the death of his father ([2Ch. 26:2](#)), as if he had been sovereign before that event. Nevertheless, it is not adopted by Josephus (‘Ant.,’ 9:9. 3), and does not appear demanded by the text (consult Exposition).

4. *The length of his reign.* Fifty-two years — with one exception ([2Ch. 33:1](#)) the longest throne-occupancy of any sovereign of Judah. Its close synchronized with the accession of Pekah to the throne of Israel by means of conspiracy and assassination ([2 Kings 15:23-25](#)).

II. A PROMISING RULER. (Vers. 4, 5.)

1. *A worshipper of Jehovah.* “He did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that his father Amaziah had done,” *i.e.* until he declined into idolatry ([2 Chronicles 25:14](#)). “He was a good man, and by nature righteous and magnanimous, and very laborious in taking care of the affairs of his kingdom” (Josephus, ‘Ant.,’ 9:10. 3); but his devotion to religion, while sincere, was, like his father's, imperfect ([2](#)

[Chronicles 25:2](#)). “The high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places” ([2 Kings 15:4](#)). See the confirmation of this in the minor prophets ([Hosea 8:14](#); [12:2](#); [Amos 2:4](#)).

2. A seeker after God. “And he sought God.”

(1) How? By observing his worship, keeping his commandments, honouring his prophets, and studying his Law — the only true way of seeking God still.

(2) When? In the days of Zechariah, “who had understanding,” or “gave instruction” (Revised Version, margin), “in the vision of God.” Nobler distinction than the former, better employment than the latter, can no man have.

(3) How long? Until Zechariah died, after which his fervour declined, the remembrance of his teacher faded, his devotion to Jehovah and the true religion diminished. So Joash behaved wisely and religiously while Jehoiada lived ([2 Chronicles 24:17](#)). Human goodness too often short-lived ([Hosea 6:4](#)).

(4) With what result? Prosperity, which kept pace with his piety. “As long as he sought Jehovah, Elohim made him to prosper” (ver. 5) — a remarkable combination of words, which perhaps teaches that, whilst prosperity or success is from God, the Supreme Being as such, it is never conferred upon good men except on the ground that they are worshippers of him as the covenant God of grace and salvation.

3. A pupil of Zechariah. “Zechariah had understanding,” and perhaps gave him instruction “in the vision [or, ‘seeing’] of God.” That this Zechariah was neither the priest whom Joash slew ([2 Chronicles 24:20](#)), nor the prophet who lived in the second year of Darius ([Zechariah 1:1](#)), is apparent. That he possessed that special gift or capacity of beholding God in vision which pertained to the prophetic calling cannot be inferred from the Chronicler's statement, “since this beholding of God, of which the prophets were conscious only in moments of highest inspiration, cannot be thought of as a work of human activity and exercise” (Berthcau). Most probably he was one who, like Daniel ([Daniel 1:17](#)), “had understanding in all visions and dreams,” and who acted as Uzziah's counsellor and teacher.

III. A BRILLIANT WARRIOR. (Vers. 2, 6, 7, 8.)

1. The fortification of Eloth. (Ver. 2.) His father's conquest of Edom ([2 Chronicles 25:11, 12](#)) had either not been pushed as far as this important harbour-town upon the Red Sea (see on [2 Chronicles 8:17](#)), or the town, though taken, had been given up and not annexed to Judah in consequence of Joash's defeat of Amaziah ([2 Chronicles 25:23](#)). On attaining to the throne, Uzziah rectified his father's oversight by capturing the town, erecting it into a fortress, and restoring it to Judah. Without it Edom was of little consequence to Judah. This exploit, which happened in the early part of Uzziah's

reign, was probably that from which he derived his name Azariah ([2 Kings 14:21, 22](#)); while its introduction at this stage in the narrative, before the chronological statement which follows it (ver. 3), may have been due to a desire on the part of the Chronicler to introduce Uzziah to his readers as the well-known monarch who had conquered, recovered, and fortified Eloth (Berthcau).

2. *The war against the Philistines and Arabians.* (Vers. 6, 7.) These had together invaded Judah upwards of eighty years previously ([2 Chronicles 21:16](#)), and Uzziah may have purposed to inflict upon them chastisement for that aggression (Keil); but the assumption is as rational that Uzziah either dreaded or experienced a combination against himself similar to that which had assailed Jehoram, and that, either (in the former case) taking time by the forelock, he fell upon his enemies ere they could strike at him, or (in the latter case), meeting the emergency with courage, he repelled the attacks they made upon him. His success in dealing with the Philistines was complete. He broke down the walls of Gath (see on [2 Chronicles 11:8](#)), which, formerly taken from the Philistines by David ([1 Chronicles 18:1](#)), had latterly been recovered, most likely in the reign of Jehoram; the wall of Jabneh, here mentioned for the first time, but probably the town in Judah named Jabneel in the days of the conquest ([Joshua 15:11](#)), Jamnia in the period of the Maccabees, at the present day Jabneh, eighteen miles north-west of Gath, “situated on a slight eminence on the west bank of the valley of Sorek (*Wddy es Surar*), about four miles from the sea coast” (Warren, in ‘Picturesque Palestine,’ 3:161); and the wall of Ashdod, one of the principal cities of the Philistines ([1 Samuel 5:1](#)), and now a village called Esdud, after which he erected cities in the domain of Ashdod and in other parts of Philistia. In like manner, he was entirely victorious over the Arabians in (Gur-baal — not the city Petra (LXX.), but perhaps the town of Gerar (Targum) — and the Meunims, who dwelt in Mann ([1 Chronicles 4:41](#)).

3. *The submission of the Ammonites.* These, whose settlements lay east of the Dead Sea, and who, in Jehoshaphat's time, had come up against Judah ([2 Chronicles 20:1](#)), were now so reduced that they rendered tribute to Judah, as the Moabites did under David ([2 Samuel 8:2](#)), and the Philistines and Arabians under Jehoshaphat ([2 Chronicles 17:11](#)).

4. *The extension of his fame to Egypt.* Not merely the report of his splendid victories travelled so far as the land of the Pharaohs, but the boundaries of his empire reached to its vicinity. An inscription of Tiglath-Pileser II. shows that the northern people of Hamath attempted to free themselves from the Assyrian yoke by going over to Azariah (‘Records,’ etc., 5:46; Schrader, ‘Keilinschriften,’ p. 221).

IV. A GREAT BUILDER. (Vers. 9, 10.) In addition to the fortress at Eloth and the cities in Philistia, he erected towers.

1. *In Jerusalem.*

- (1) At the corner-gate, *i.e.* at the north-west corner of the city ([2 Chronicles 25:23](#)).
- (2) At the valley-gate, *i.e.* on the west side, where the Jaffa gate now is.
- (3) At the turning of the wall, *i.e.* at a curve in the city wall on the east side of Zion, near the horse-gate. This tower commanded both the temple hill and Zion against attacks from the south-east.

2. *In the desert, or wilderness.* The place was “the steppe-lands on the west side of the Dead Sea” (Keil); the object, the protection of his flocks and shepherds against attacks from robber-bands, whether of Edomites or Arabians.

V. AN ENTHUSIASTIC HUSBANDMAN. (Ver. 10.)

1. *An extensive cattle-breeder.* He had much cattle in the region just mentioned, in the lowland between the mountains of Judaea and the Mediterranean, and in the fertile district on the east of the Dead Sea, from Arnon to near Heshbon in the north. For the use of these animals he hewed cisterns in each of these localities.

2. *An ardent agriculturist.* He kept farmers and vine-dressers upon the mountains and in the fruitful fields. “He took care to cultivate the ground. He planted it with all sorts of plants, and sowed it with all sorts of seeds” (Josephus).

VI. AN ABLE GENERAL. (Vers. 11-15.)

1. *He organized the army.*

(1) The number of fighting men was reckoned up by Hananiah, one of the king's captains, assisted by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the steward, two officials practised in writing and the making up of lists. The total force, according to their estimation, was 307,500 (370,000, Josephus) able-bodied and thoroughly disciplined troops, with 2600 (2000, Josephus) heads of fathers' houses, mighty men of valour, who acted as superior officers or divisional commanders.

(2) The entire host was arranged into bands, detachments, or army corps, each father's house, perhaps, composing a regiment, and a group of these a battalion.

(3) Whether these army corps served in rotation (Jamieson) is not stated.

2. *He armed the soldiers.* For all the host he prepared the necessary weapons for offensive and defensive warfare — for the first, spears, bows, and slings; for the second, shields, helmets, and coats of mail; or perhaps, for the heavy-armed troops, shields, spears, and helmets; and for the light infantry, bows and sling-stones. The mention of “sling-stones,” it has been thought (Bertheau), was intended to indicate the

completeness of his preparations, as in the late France-German war Marshal Leboeuf declared the French army to be ready for the projected campaign down to the “shoe-buckle.” Besides furnishing each soldier with a set of weapons, Uzziah collected a store of such “that he might have them in readiness to put into the hands of his subjects on any exigency” (A. Clarke)

3. *He fortified the capital* This, which Joash of Israel ([2 Chronicles 25:23](#)) had weakened, he strengthened by placing on the towers and battlements of its walls ingenious machines — “engines invented by cunning men” — to shoot arrows and great stones withal, like the *catapultae* and *ballistae* of the Romans.

LESSONS.

1. The beneficial influence of parental piety — it tends to reproduce itself in the children.
2. The true Source of all prosperity, whether temporal or spiritual — God.
3. The necessary condition of all permanent prosperity for individuals or communities — religion, seeking God.
4. The unspeakable advantage to kings and subjects of having as their counsellors men who have understanding in the visions of God.
5. The obvious wisdom of sovereigns and their people devoting attention to the cultivation of the soft.
6. The lawfulness, in nations as in individuals, of taking due pre-cautions for safety. — W.

[Verses 16-23](#). —

Uzziah the leprous.

I. UZZIAH'S TRANSGRESSION. (Vers. 16-19)

1. *The cause of it.*

(1) Pride. “His heart was lifted up.” This the inevitable tendency of too much material and temporal prosperity ([Deuteronomy 8:13, 14](#)). Exemplified in Amaziah ([2 Chronicles 25:18, 19](#); [2 Kings 14:9](#)), Sennacherib ([2 Chronicles 32:31](#); [2 Kings 18:19-35](#)), Nebuchadnezzar ([Daniel 4:30-34](#); [5:20](#)).

(2) Ignorance. He perceived not that his heart was being lifted up “to his destruction.” Had he foreseen the consequences of his rash act, he might have paused. But questions of right and wrong must be determined without regard to temporal results. Only none need remain in ignorance of this, that the path of holiness is the path of safety ([Proverbs 3:17](#)), whatever be its external issues; and that the way of disobedience, however promising to appearance, is and must be the way of peril and doom ([Proverbs 4:19](#)).

2. *The nature of it.* “He went into the temple of the *Lord* to burn incense upon the altar of incense,” *i.e.* he took upon himself the priestly function of ministering before Jehovah in the holy place. Whether in doing so he conceived himself to be following in the steps of David and Solomon (Thenius, Ewald, Stanley) may be doubted. It is not clear that either of these sovereigns ever offered incense in the sanctuary proper, though they frequently officiated at the offering of sacrifices in the outer court on the occasion of religious festivals (Bertheau, Keil, Bahr). More likely is the view that Uzziah desired to ape the potentates of the world generally, as *e.g.* those of Egypt (Harkness, ‘Egyptian Life and History,’ p. 44), who, as supreme priests (*pontifices maximi*), with other priests to aid them, conducted temple-worship in honour of the gods. In any case, what he did expressly violated the Divine Law, which reserved the privilege of entering the holy place and ministering therein exclusively for the priests ([Exodus 30:7, 8](#); [Leviticus 16:2, 12, 13](#); [Numbers 18:1-10](#)). The statement of Josephus (‘Ant.,’ 9:10. 4) may well be authentic, that the occasion which tempted Uzziah to forget himself was the celebration of some high national festival.

3. The *aggravations of it.* He committed this offence:

(1) When he was strong; when his empire was at the height of its splendour, and himself at the top of his fame; when his kingly magnificence was in full bloom, and his regal heart had everything it could desire — in short, when he ought to have been supremely contented and happy, without aspiring after more.

(2) Against that God through whose assistance he had climbed to the pedestal of earthly renown on which he stood, thereby furnishing a proof of monstrous ingratitude quite on a level with that of his father Amaziah ([2 Chronicles 25:14](#)).

(3) In spite of the remonstrance of Azariah the priest and eighty colleagues, who, going into the sanctuary after him, courageously reminded him of the heinous character of his proposed action, as an invasion of the province Jehovah had set apart for the Aaronic priesthood, fearlessly commanded him to leave the sacred edifice, and warned him of the peril he incurred in thus defying the ordinance of God. Men who have God upon their side have no need to be afraid of kings. Nothing emboldens the human spirit like a consciousness of right ([Psalm 27:1](#)).

(4) With ebullitions of kingly rage. According to Josephus, he threatened to kill Azariah and his colleagues unless they held their peace ([Proverbs 19:12](#); [16:14](#)). Wrath often leads to murder.

II. UZZAIAH'S PUNISHMENT. (Vers. 19-23.)

1. *Sudden.* The Lord smote him ([2 Kings 15:5](#)) where he stood, within the holy place, censer in hand, attired in a priestly robe, fuming at Azariah and his eighty assistants, ready, in defiance of one and all, to go through with the unhallowed project he had in hand. Foolish Uzziah! Jehovah, who all the while was looking on ([2 Chronicles 7:16](#); [Habakkuk 2:20](#)), simply stretched forth his invisible finger, and the daringly sacrilegious act was arrested. According to Josephus ('Ant.,' 9:10. 4), at that moment a great earthquake shook the ground, splitting the mountain on which the city stood, and making in the temple dome a rent, through which the sun's rays, shining, fell upon the king's face, insomuch that the leprosy seized on him immediately (cf. [Amos 1:1](#); [Micah 1:4](#); [Zechariah 14:5](#)).

2. *Severe.* The leprosy brake forth (or rose as the sun) in his forehead. (On the nature of this disease, consult the Exposition, and see Keil's 'Biblische Archaologie,' s. 114.) The same punishment inflicted on Miriam for speaking against Moses ([Numbers 12:10](#)), and on Gehazi for lying to Elisha ([2 Kings 5:27](#)). The severity of the stroke measured the greatness of the sin for which it fell.

3. *Conspicuous.* "The chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous." The signs and tokens of this plague had been laid down in the Law of Moses ([Leviticus 13](#)). Like the mark upon Cain's brow ([Genesis 4:15](#)), the spot upon Uzziah's forehead proclaimed him an object of Divine wrath. Many suffer on account of their transgressions whose chastisement is not visible to their fellow-men; that Uzziah's was perceptible to Azariah and his colleagues was a woof of the heinous character of his offence, while it served as a warning to others. One of Jehovah's purposes in inflicting punishment on evil-doers is to convince beholders of the horrible iniquity of sin, and deter them through "the terror of the Lord" ([2 Corinthians 5:11](#).) from its commission.

4. *Humiliating.* The priests thrust the stricken king from the sacred dwelling; yea, the king himself "hasted to go out." Moreover, he was henceforth as an unclean person, out off from the congregation of Jehovah ([Leviticus 13:45, 46](#); [Numbers 5:2](#)), and, because of the infectious nature of his malady, lodged in "several house," *i.e.* a leper-house, or infirmary. As the leprosy, in its spreading, wasting, corrupting, loathsome, contagious, incurable character, was a hideous emblem of sin, so the exclusion of the leper from the congregation, and his isolation from the society of his fellows, was an impressive picture of the fate reserved for unpardoned sinners ([Psalm 1:5, 6](#)). It must not, however, be assumed that Uzziah died in impenitence.

5. *Fatal*. It ended in death, as all sin does ([Ezekiel 18:4](#); [Romans 6:23](#)). Yet sin is not incurable by Divine power any more than leprosy was. As Miriam, Naaman, and the man who came to Christ ([Matthew 8:2](#)) were cleansed, so may the sinful soul be renewed ([1 John 1:7](#)).

6. *Posthumous*. Uzziah's punishment followed him after death. His people buried him, indeed, but not in the royal mausoleum, only in its neighbourhood, in the field of burial which belonged to the kings, lest his leprous dust should defile that of his fathers.

LESSONS.

1. The danger of prosperity.
2. The sin of pride.
3. The unlawfulness of will-worship.
4. The certainty that God can punish sin.
5. The hopelessness of those who die in sin. — W.

Pulpit Commentary, The - The Pulpit Commentary – Volume 6: Chronicles.

1 Corinthians 5:19-23

[5:9-11](#) When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. But I wasn't talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or who are greedy or are swindlers or idol worshipers. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that. What I meant was that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a Christian yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or a drunkard, or a swindler. Don't even eat with such people.^{NLT} The words "when I wrote to you before" refer to Paul's earlier letter to the Corinthian church, often called the "lost letter" because it has not been preserved. In that letter, he had told the Corinthians *not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin*. Either the Corinthians had misunderstood what Paul meant, or they had avoided his command by pointing out the impossibility of not associating with sinners in a sinful world. So Paul made it clear here that he *wasn't talking about unbelievers*, for they, by nature, are involved in sexual sin, greed, swindling, and idol worship. Believers cannot disassociate themselves completely from unbelievers—they *would have to leave this world to avoid people like that*. In addition, with no contact with unbelievers, believers would not be able to carry out Christ's command to tell them about salvation ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)).

Paul meant that believers were *not to associate with anyone who claims to be a Christian* and yet has a sinful lifestyle. Paul listed a few sins such as sexual sin, greed, idol worship, abuse, drunkenness, or swindling (stealing by violence, extortion). Believers must separate themselves from those who claim to be Christians yet indulge in sins explicitly forbidden in Scripture and then rationalize their actions. By

rationalizing their sin, these "believers" harm others for whom Christ died and they tarnish the image of God in their lives. A church that includes such people is hardly fit to be the light of the world because it distorts the picture of Christ that it presents to the world. The church has a responsibility to rebuke, correct, and restore those in the fellowship who claim to be believers but live like unbelievers.

5:12-13 It isn't my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your job to judge those inside the church who are sinning in these ways. God will judge those on the outside; but as the Scriptures say, "You must remove the evil person from among you."^{NLT} The difference between believers and nonbelievers lies in their relationship to Jesus Christ, but a difference also exists in how believers are to relate to those inside and outside the church. The *outsiders* (referring to nonbelievers) are to be met where they are (even in their sinful lifestyles, [5:9-11](#)) and offered the gospel message. Yet the believers are not responsible to *judge* them because *God will judge those on the outside*.

In the church, however, believers have the *job to judge those . . . who are sinning in these ways*. The Bible consistently says not to criticize people by gossiping or making rash judgments. At the same time, however, believers are to judge and deal with sinners "who are sinning in these ways," referring to blatant, unrepented sin as described in 5:9-11. Paul's instructions for this sinful man—*you must remove the evil person from among you* ([5:1-2](#))—come from [Deuteronomy 17:7](#). This instruction should not be used to handle trivial matters or to take revenge; nor should it be applied to individual problems between believers. These verses are instructions for dealing with open sin in the church, with a person who claims to be a Christian and yet who sins without remorse. The church is to confront and discipline such a person in love.

See Also:

[Chart: Church Discipline](#)

Life-Sharing Series From Triage To Transformation Lesson 3 The Intensive Care Unit (ICU) 2 Chronicles 26:15-23

1. What comes to your mind when you are told that someone is intensive care?

I think someone is lying down with tubes and monitors attached to them, because their lives could go either way. They may pull out of it, but they may not. Either way, the person is in need of prayer.

2. What do you think would put a person in a spiritual intensive care unit?

I think reaping the consequences of our sin will put us in spiritual intensive care, and I think a wilfull rejection of what we know is right, but choosing a path we know is wrong also puts us in spiritual intensive care unit. Any time we turn ourselves into our own gods who sets the rules for our lives, we are headed for spiritual intensive care.

2 Chronicles 26:15-23 (NIV)

¹⁵ In Jerusalem he made machines designed by skillful men for use on the towers and on the corner defenses to shoot arrows and hurl large stones. His fame spread far and wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful.

¹⁶ But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the LORD his God, and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.

¹⁷ Azariah the priest with eighty other courageous priests of the LORD followed him in.

¹⁸ They confronted him and said, "It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD. That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honored by the LORD God."

¹⁹ Uzziah, who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, became angry. While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in the LORD's temple, leprosy broke out on his forehead.

²⁰ When Azariah the chief priest and all the other priests looked at him, they saw that he had leprosy on his forehead, so they hurried him out. Indeed, he himself was eager to leave, because the LORD had afflicted him.

²¹ King Uzziah had leprosy until the day he died. He lived in a separate house--leprosy, and excluded from the temple of the LORD. Jotham his son had charge of the palace and governed the people of the land.

²² The other events of Uzziah's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.

²³ Uzziah rested with his fathers and was buried near them in a field for burial that belonged to the kings, for people said, "He had leprosy." And Jotham his son succeeded him as king.

3. Often times cancer is spreading through our body and we do not recognize it. How does pride often do the same thing?

We often do not see pride as pride. We may call it taking the initiative, we may think we are helping someone out, we may think we are doing something to make us more available for something greater than we are doing, or we just think we are right and others are wrong and we have to do something to show them that they are wrong. Pride hides behind so many good motives for why we have done what we are doing. Sometimes we have to peel off layers of motives to get to what is really at the heart of the issue.

4. King Uzziah was 16 when he became King and reigned for 52 years. How might that have contributed to his pride?

Up to this point, no king had reigned as long as Uzziah had. Not only was he 16 when he became king, the text seems to suggest that he was not the oldest of his father's son. The text said the people came and made him king which might indicate someone else was in line ahead of Uzziah. This becoming King at age 16 when someone else was ahead of him, may have led Uzziah to believe that he was special and worthy of extra treatment. Perhaps he had demonstrated some leadership talent or had some gift that caused the people to make him king. Whenever we have a special ability, it can grow into a source of pride if we do not intentionally keep it in check.

2 Chronicles 26:4-5 (NIV) ⁴ He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done. ⁵ He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. As long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success.

5. The above verses refer to King Uzziah. How come God's blessing in our lives are not enough to keep us seeking after God?

Things can never satisfy the deepest longing in our hearts. No longer than we receive a blessing, we find out there is something new that looks like a bigger blessing and we can begin to crave it. Instead of seeking God for God, we can seek God for the blessing. If God fails to give us what we want as soon as we want it, the temptation is to go and get it by some other means. There is no one thing we can do or receive that makes our lives totally complete. Even the guys who just won a superbowl, will be booed by the fans next year if they fail to make the playoffs. We have to want to seek after God because it will not accidentally happen.

6. With all that he had going for him, why do you think Uzziah insisted on attempting to burn incense on the altar of incense?

I think it was as simply as proving that he could do something no other king had done and could do. He had become so great, he could be prophet, priest, and king all in one. Uzziah did not want to stay within the realm that God had appointed for him. So often we want to move beyond where God has called us to be without realizing there are seasons in our lives in which God wants us to stay in a certain place for a certain season. There are some places God never intends for us to go and they are always clearly defined by the word of God. Having all that the world has to offer does not put us above the teachings of God.

7. Why were the actions of the priests courageous?

They knew that to challenge Uzziah could mean certain death for them. The last thing a person full of pride wants is to be embarrassed in front of others. Can you imagine what it would have been like for the word to have spread that the great King Uzziah had been stopped by some priests from doing what he really

wanted to do. Nobody had told him what to do for years. He was being told to leave the sanctuary. He was chastised as being unfaithful to God. He was told he was not going to be honored by God. Who did these priests think they were. He was in angry tirade at the priest when he was struck by God.

8. What responsibility do we have toward other Christians, when we know they are planning to disobey the word of God with their lifestyle?

We do have a responsibility to at least talk with the person. We are too quickly to think we have to have a perfect lifestyle to confront others, but that just is not so. All we need is a desire to keep growing in Jesus on our part. We are often afraid of losing or damaging our relationship with the other person.

Galatians 6:1-2 (NIV)

¹ Brothers and Sisters , if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. ² Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

9. How is pride at the root of our disobedience in almost all areas of a plan of continual sin?

We have chosen to put ourselves above the Scriptures and we think that we can actually control the future. Many times we may even plan to one day stop doing what we are doing, but acting as little gods, we even think we can know when that day will be and what are going to be the circumstances surrounding it. There is no way we can know where a willful choice to disobey God is going to take us or who is going to pay the real price for our actions. Pride tells us that we are in charge. Nothing could be further from the truth.

10. What's the difference between judging a person and trying to keep them from going astray and should we follow the word of God in the following passage?

1 Corinthians 5:9-13 (NIV)

⁹ I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- ¹⁰ not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. ¹¹ But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. ¹² What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? ¹³ God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

Judging a person means putting them outside of the grace of God. God can reach anybody with God's love. Saying that a person's behavior is wrong, is not judging a person, it may simply be agreeing the with teachings of Scripture. We are called to admonish and rebuke each other, because we are all going to need it at some point in our lives.

11. Should we expect negative confrontation when we challenge the behavior of others as the priest did? When should that fear of confrontation not be enough to keep us from taking a stand?

12. What do you think would be the result if God dealt with willful disobedience today as quickly as God did with Uzziah or with Ananias and Saphira in Acts 5?

13. Why do you think God is slow to dispense punishment for sin today?

14. What can we learn from Uzziah about the connection between repentance, forgiveness, and the future?

15. Do you think Uzziah was an ICU patient that left the ICU unit healed?

16. Why is it that what we do in hour period can so drastically alter our spiritual condition for years to come?

Life-Sharing Series From Triage To Transformation Lesson 4 The Recovery John 9 :1-4

JESUS HEALS THE MAN BORN BLIND / [9:1-12](#) / [148](#)

Thus far, Jesus has explained his identity in many ways to his listeners. Often he would use a physical object, person, or setting to depict a certain spiritual aspect of his life and purpose. For example:

- While sitting by Jacob's well and talking to the Samaritan woman, Jesus explained that he could give her "living water" ([4:10](#) NKJV).
- After feeding over 5,000 people with two small loaves of bread, Jesus explained that he was "the bread of life" ([6:35](#) NKJV).
- At the Feast of Tabernacles, where a symbolic act took place commemorating the time when Moses struck the rock in the wilderness and it brought forth water for the parched Israelites, Jesus told all the people, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink" ([7:37](#) NKJV).
- Again at the Feast of Tabernacles, another symbolic act took place commemorating the pillar of fire that guided the Israelites on their wilderness journey. Jesus told all the people, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (8:12 NKJV).

All of Jesus' miracles also pointed to who he was. John follows Jesus' discourse about being "the light of the world" ([8:12](#); [9:5](#)) with the account of Jesus restoring sight to a man born blind. This story illustrates the spiritual truth of Christ being the Light of the World. As the blind beggar comes to "see" that Jesus is the Messiah, so Jesus offers us spiritual sight to enable us to see him as our Savior and Lord. We too are born spiritually blind and need the gift of sight that only the Light of the World can provide. The Light of the World becomes our light when we put our faith in Jesus Christ.

[9:1](#) Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth.^{NKJV} In ancient cultures, as in many modern cultures, blind people had no choice but to be beggars. This man probably was very poor and was begging along the roadside, thus Jesus saw him as he passed by. Because Jesus did the "seeing" and the disciples did the "asking" the implication is that perhaps Jesus pointed out the man to the disciples. Jesus may have spoken to the blind man. The wording of the following question seems to imply that the group was standing directly in front of the blind man.

LIFE APPLICATION

A CURIOSITY

We have a tendency not to "see" those who are disabled or to treat them in ways that emphasize or trivialize their disadvantage. For instance, blind people are often treated as if they can't hear either, which is exactly what the disciples did on this occasion.

People appreciate being genuinely cared for, but resent being treated as a "case," "problem," or "curiosity." When dealing with people who are suffering or disabled, we must try to empathize with them. We should always strive to treat others in the way we would want to be treated, were our situations reversed (see [Matthew 7:12](#)).

9:2-3 "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"^{NRSV} The disciples believed, based at least partly on Old Testament texts like [Exodus 34:7](#), that a disability such as blindness was a punishment for sin. Many people around the world believe that suffering results from sin. People tend to believe that displeasing God leads to punishment; therefore, they assume that whenever a person seems to be undergoing punishment, there is reason to suspect wrongdoing. This assumption, for example, drove Job's friends to treat him with heavy-handed judgment.

But if suffering always indicates sin, what do we say about babies born with deformities or handicaps? If this man was *born blind*, who sinned, the man (who must have somehow sinned in the womb) or his parents?

LIFE APPLICATION

WHY THE HURT?

In Jewish culture, many believed that all calamities and suffering resulted from sin. But this man suffered so that God could be glorified. We live in a fallen world where good behavior is not always rewarded and bad behavior not always punished; therefore, innocent people sometimes suffer. If God removed suffering whenever we asked, we would follow him for comfort and convenience, not out of love and devotion. Regardless of the reasons for our suffering, Jesus has the power to help us deal with it. When we suffer from a disease, tragedy, or disability, we should not ask, Why did this happen to me? or What did I do wrong? Instead, we should ask God to give us strength for the

trial and a clearer perspective on what is happening.

The disciples were thinking about what caused the blindness. Jesus shifted their attention away from the cause to the purpose. Jesus demonstrated God's power by healing the man. Instead of worrying about the cause of our problems, we should instead find out how God could use our problem to demonstrate his power. Jesus explained that the man's blindness had nothing to do with his sin or his parents' sin: **"But this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."**^{NIV} These words do not mean that God heartlessly inflicted blindness on this man at birth, but simply that he allowed nature to run its course so that the victim would ultimately bring glory to God through the reception of both physical and spiritual sight (see [9:30-38](#)).

LIFE APPLICATION

GOD MAY USE OUR SUFFERING

How can God be at work in a desperate situation? There may be times when we have done everything possible to solve a problem. After we have explored the options, exhausted our resources, probed our motives, asked for advice, and done what was suggested, we may have found that nothing seems to have changed. We may have persisted in prayer and asked others to pray for us, and yet perceive no answer. The truth is, the solution, resolution, or answer may not ever come in this life. But it is also true that regardless of our difficulty and whether or not our burden is removed, God is still at work.

- God may use our experience to help advise and encourage others who pass through the same trials.
 - God may use our suffering to break through the hardness of another person and bring about change in them.
 - God may use our unresolved need to motivate others to keep searching for a solution from which others will benefit.
 - God may use our endurance in suffering rather than the suffering itself to be an encouraging example to other believers.
-

[9:4-5](#) "We must do the work of him who sent me."^{NIV} This verse is also translated, "We must work the works of him who sent me" (NRSV), and some early manuscripts end the sentence in the plural, "us." Evidently, Jesus was speaking of himself and his disciples as coworkers. He wanted them to learn from him because they would continue his work as his sent ones (see [20:21](#)). Jesus included the disciples in this work (although they actually did nothing for this blind man) because they would be the

ones doing the work of God on earth after his resurrection and ascension. What a privilege to be called Christ's coworkers (see [1 Corinthians 3:9](#); [2 Corinthians 5:21](#); [6:1](#)). We must never doubt our role or significance.

"As long as it is day."^{NIV} While Christ was in the world, light was in the world; it was "day." The "day" was the time allotted for Jesus to do his work on earth. However, **"night is coming, when no one can work."**^{NIV} The night would come, that is, Jesus would soon die, and would no longer be in the world in physical form. The coming of the night speaks of the shortness of time Jesus had left to fulfill his purpose on earth.

LIFE APPLICATION

TODAY

Jesus' words held a note of urgency. It may be "day" now, but it won't always be so. We must not put off until tomorrow what God wants us to do now.

Today is the day. If God presents an opportunity and also provides the strength, skill, or other resources to do it, we ought to respond immediately.

The night is coming soon enough; then our day of opportunity will end. What have you done today with eternity in mind?

"I am the light of the world."^{NIV} The healing of the blind man affirmed Jesus' identity as the Messiah, for the Old Testament predicted that the Messiah would come to heal the blind ([Isaiah 29:18](#); [35:5](#); [42:7](#)).

[9:6-7](#) He spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes.^{NRSV} Why would Jesus perform this miracle in such a strange way? This is not typical of the way Jesus performed miracles, according to John. But Mark records two incidents of miraculous healing where Jesus used his saliva—to cure a deaf and dumb man in Decapolis and to heal a blind man in Bethsaida ([Mark 7:33](#); [8:23](#)). John's account, however, provides the only record of Jesus spitting on the ground and forming clay from it.

From antiquity, spit or saliva was thought to have medicinal power. But the Jews were suspicious of anyone who used saliva in healing because it was associated with magical arts. It is worth noting, however, that the role of Jesus' saliva in the healing was primarily in making the mud. As has been pointed out before (see section on [2:6-8](#)), Jesus did not use random objects without a specific purpose.

First, Jesus used the clay to help develop the man's faith (he had to do as Jesus said, which was to go and wash in a certain pool). Second, Jesus kneaded the mud with his hands in order to make the clay to put on the man's eyes. This constituted

"work" on a Sabbath day and would upset the Pharisees. Jesus had much to teach them about God and his Sabbath.

"Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent).^{NRSV} Siloam is a Greek translation of the Hebrew name Shiloah, meaning "sent." The pool of Siloam had been built by King Hezekiah. His workers had built an underground tunnel from the Spring of Gihon in the Kidron Valley outside of Jerusalem. This tunnel channeled the water into the pool of Siloam inside the city walls. Located in the southeast corner of the city, the tunnel and pool were originally built to help Jerusalem's inhabitants survive in times of siege. If the city were ever surrounded by enemy armies, the people inside could always get fresh water without having to leave the city ([2 Kings 20:20](#); [2 Chronicles 32:30](#)). These waters may symbolize the work that Jesus, the sent one, had come to do. They provided the deliverance and healing sent by God, illustrating the full deliverance from sin that Jesus provided for us.

9:8-12 These verses record the various reactions of the blind man's neighbors to his healing. Some thought he looked like the one who used to sit and beg. Others positively identified him as the same man. Still others objected that this only looked like that blind man. In response, the healed man insisted, **"I am the man."**^{NIV} Finally realizing that the person who once was blind had received his sight, they asked, **"How then were your eyes opened?"**^{NIV} The formerly blind man testified to the healing power of Jesus by recounting the story of how he had been healed.

Of course, the crowd wanted to track down this healer (perhaps they assumed it was Jesus), so they asked, **"Where is this man?"**^{NIV} But the man had been blind when Jesus sent him to the pool of Siloam; therefore, he didn't know where Jesus had gone afterward. From this point on, the formerly blind man began to see more clearly who Jesus was, while the Pharisees became more spiritually blind. While sin did not cause the man to be born blind, sin *did* cause the Pharisees' blindness.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS QUESTION THE BLIND MAN / [9:13-34](#) / [149](#)

Because the people discovered both a miracle and a mystery surrounding the healing of the blind man, they took him to what they considered the most dependable place for exploring such matters. The Pharisees quickly concluded that whatever else the healer might be, he certainly wasn't from God, for otherwise he would not work on the Sabbath. In their quest for "truth," these Pharisees tried a number of explanations to invalidate the miracle: (1) perhaps the blind man had not been blind from birth or had not been totally blind; (2) perhaps God did this miracle directly (but they would recognize no human agent).

When the formerly blind man pointed out the obvious answers that they had been so studiously avoiding, they responded by viciously berating him and expelling him from their presence.

The astonishing fact of the man's newly given vision eluded this group as if they were blind. Later Jesus pointed this out as their problem, over their strenuous objections.

9:13-15 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind.^{NIV} Why did they bring him to the Pharisees? The local synagogue was the equivalent of small-claims court. If formal charges had been made, the case would have gone to the Sanhedrin, the high court. But [verse 14](#) also provides a possible answer: **the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath.**^{NIV} The people had realized that Jesus had performed another miracle on the Sabbath and that the Pharisees would want to know about this event. This miracle was news because it was very unusual ([9:32](#)). Healing, along with many other actions defined as work, was strictly controlled on the Sabbath. Healing was only to occur in cases of life and death, for which the blind man did not qualify because he had been living with his blindness since birth.

The Pharisees wanted to know how this man had received his sight, and the man explained it in the simplest of terms. Because the man was still blind during the interview with Jesus, he really didn't know who Jesus was. He could only exclaim, **I washed, and now I see.**^{NIV} But no one cheers and congratulates the man on his healing, instead they condemn the healer.

9:16-17 "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath."^{NRSV} The Jewish Sabbath, Saturday, was the weekly holy day of rest. The Pharisees had made a long list of specific do's and don'ts regarding the Sabbath in an attempt to explain and put into practice what the Scriptures meant when they prohibited work on the Sabbath. Kneading the clay, anointing his eyes, and healing the man (whose life was not in danger) were all considered work and therefore were forbidden. Jesus may have purposely made the clay in order to emphasize his teaching about the Sabbath—that it is right to care for others' needs even if it involves working on a day of rest. But because Jesus broke their petty rules, they immediately decided he was *not from God*.

But some other Pharisees questioned this condemnation: **"How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?"**^{NRSV} There is no indication that these men were inclined to believe in Jesus; more likely, they were protecting themselves from the charge of obvious bias. Thus, **there was a division among them.**^{NKJV} While the Pharisees conducted investigations and debated about Jesus, people were being healed and lives were being changed. The Pharisees' skepticism was not based on insufficient evidence, but on jealousy of Jesus' popularity and his influence on the people.

CLEARER VISION

Our personal description of Jesus to others makes an impact. John encourages all of us whose eyes, hearts, and minds have been opened by Christ to speak out for the Lord. This lesson is for us because the formerly blind man's vision of Jesus got clearer and clearer as he reflected on what had happened and listened to the accusers frantically trying to discredit what he knew to be undeniably true. At first his description of Jesus wasn't accurate, but it was heartfelt. He said what he understood. New believers often bring that quality of freshness and earnestness to their statements about Jesus. How quickly we forget the wonder of being able to see spiritually for the first time!

We can testify to the fact that we were once blind to our own separation from God, blind to our need, blind to God's influence in our lives, and blinded by the world around us. We may not be able to explain in detail how Jesus has done what he has done in our lives, but we can say with conviction: Once I was blind; now I can see!

What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?^{NKJV} The staunchest Pharisees attacked the healed man with a renewed attempt to break down his testimony. But this newly sighted beggar responded with even more praise for his healer than he had offered previously—he called Jesus **a prophet**. The man was searching for a category in which to place the one who healed him. At first ([9:11](#)) the healer was just a man. But under questioning a new title came to mind: "prophet."

[9:18-21](#) The Pharisees **still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight**,^{NIV} so they called in the man's parents in the hope that they would refute their own son's testimony. Failure to reach quick agreement on the case meant they needed to review the "facts." They asked the parents if this man was really their son, and if he was really born blind. The Pharisees were exasperated: "**How is it that now he can see?**"^{NIV} they asked, although we may wonder what they expected the parents to answer.

They knew their son, and they knew his previous condition, but how he could see, they didn't know. Instead of giving praise for their son's healer, they responded, "**Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.**"^{NRSV} The parents did not deny their son's story, but neither did they support his claim as their son had done.

[9:22-23](#) His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.^{NIV} The Greek expression for *be put out of the synagogue* (aposynagogos genetai) literally means "become de-synagogued"—similar to the idea of excommunication. The expression is unique to John's Gospel (used here and in [12:42](#); [16:2](#)).

Jewish regulations stipulated two kinds of excommunication: one that would last for thirty days until the offender could be reconciled, and one that was a permanent "ban" accompanied by a curse. Because the synagogue controlled every aspect of life (civic, recreational, legal, and religious), an individual cut off from the synagogue would suffer severe isolation. Many Jews in John's day had been "de-synagogued" because they had confessed Jesus to be the Christ. (Jesus predicted this—see [16:2](#).) In Jesus' day, there was also a kind of informal prohibition against any Jew who would confess Jesus to be the Christ.

But why would such a harsh punishment be given people who followed this Jesus, whom the Pharisees had proclaimed as a fake Messiah? Up to this point, Jesus had been accepted by many as "the Prophet . . . [and] they intended to come and make him king by force" ([6:14-15](#) NIV). He had done miracles that could not be ignored or explained away. Many thought he was "the Christ" ([7:26](#) NIV). The Pharisees were facing a politically dangerous situation. If the crowds were to take Jesus by force and make him king, Rome would respond quickly and forcefully to suppress such a revolt. Roman intervention would cause incredible troubles for the Jews. So the religious leaders decided on the harsh punishment of being put out of the synagogue for anyone who dared believe in Jesus.

[9:24-25](#) A second time they summoned the man who had been blind.^{NIV} Not content with their cross-examination of the healed man, the Pharisees called him in a second time with a command, "**Give glory to God!**"^{NRSV} This means "admit the truth" (see [Joshua 7:19](#); [Jeremiah 13:16](#)). The Pharisees tried to make the man confess his wrong in proclaiming Jesus as a prophet and to make him agree with them that Jesus was a sinner.

LIFE APPLICATION

LOOKING FOR A LOOPHOLE

In reviewing the facts of the case, the Pharisees had no intention of believing or following the one who had performed the healing. They wanted to disqualify Jesus. They avoided the truth in their quest for a loophole.

Occasionally we will meet people who only want to argue and debate the merits and claims of Jesus without ever deciding to follow him. They mask their rejection under a thin cover of inquiry. Perhaps, like the Pharisees, they have too much to lose. Prestige, power, and personal independence are hard to give up. It is easier to keep the argument on intellectual grounds than to face our spiritual and moral shortcomings. Sometimes, people have worked hard to get to their comfortable place in life and are unwilling to consider change. We must help them see that Christ gives both the power and the

desire to change.

But the healed man would not give in; he would not say whether or not Jesus was a sinner. What he would say was what he had experienced: **"One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see"**^{NKJV} So many Christians, having been blind and then received spiritual sight, have testified the same! Believers don't need to know all the answers before they can share Christ with others. All they must know is how Jesus changed their lives. Each of us is our own expert on that topic! We should tell people what Jesus did for us, and trust God to help our words draw others to him.

9:26-27 "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"^{NIV} The Pharisees relentlessly asked who did the healing and how it happened. Perhaps they hoped the man would contradict his earlier story so they could accuse him.

"I have told you already and you did not listen. . . . Do you want to become his disciples, too?"^{NIV} This brings out the irony of the situation. The religious leaders were making such extensive inquiry about Jesus' identity that it would appear they wanted to follow him—when actually they had no intention of becoming his disciples.

The religious leaders were unable to throttle the healed beggar's willingness to testify for Jesus. In fact, the more the Pharisees questioned this man who had received his sight, the stronger and clearer he became about Jesus. Their blind obstinacy helped his clarity. See how his vision cleared:

- At first, the man recognized his healer as "the man called Jesus" ([9:11](#) NRSV).
- Then he knew Jesus was "a prophet" ([9:17](#)).
- Then he saw Jesus as one who was "from God" and had performed a miracle never done before ([9:32-33](#)).
- Then finally, when confronted by Jesus, he believed that Jesus is the "Son of Man" (the Messiah), worthy of worship ([9:35-38](#)).

9:28-29 "We are disciples of Moses!"^{NIV} While the Pharisees questioned the man, they persistently defended their adherence to Moses (they were confident that God had spoken to Moses). But Jesus had already told them that if they really knew Moses and understood his writings, they would know the Messiah, for Moses wrote of him ([5:45-47](#)).

"But as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."^{NIV} The word *fellow* here is derogatory—as if Jesus were just another person with no credentials. It is ironic that the Pharisees claimed not to know where Jesus was from, for that was one item they believed would be true about the Messiah: "No one will know where he is

from" ([7:27](#) NIV). They refused to accept Jesus' words or believe that the signs he did validated his claims. They chose to reject him.

[9:30-31](#) This reasoning (and probably their insults too) astonished the healed man, so he tried to explain to them that the act of giving him sight proved that Jesus was a man whom God listened to: **"We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will."**^{NRSV} There are many Scriptures that support this man's statement:

- "For what is the hope of the godless . . . ? Will God hear their cry . . . ?" ([Job 27:8-9](#) NRSV)
- "There they cry out, but he does not answer, because of the pride of evildoers. Surely God does not hear an empty cry, nor does the Almighty regard it." ([Job 35:12-13](#) NRSV)
- "The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous." ([Proverbs 15:29](#) NRSV)
- "When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood." ([Isaiah 1:15](#) NRSV)

As a boy, this healed man certainly had been taught the Scriptures, and he pointed out this fact to these supposedly "learned" Pharisees. God does not listen to the requests of sinners, only to the requests of those devoted to him. This verse is also translated, "He listens to the godly man who does his will" (NIV).

[9:32-34](#) **"Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."**^{NRSV} Jesus had done the unprecedented, but not the unpredicted. In their fury, the Pharisees were blind to the Old Testament descriptions that specifically speak of the Messiah bringing sight to the blind (see [Isaiah 29:18](#); [35:5](#); [42:7](#)). Indeed, many thought the healing of the blind would be the messianic miracle *par excellence* because there was never any record of such a healing in the Old Testament.

The healed man's condemnation of the Pharisees' irrational rejection of Jesus proved too much for them to take, so **they threw him out**^{NIV} (i.e., "they expelled him from the synagogue") with a curse about his presumed guilt from birth: **"You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?"**^{NRSV}

See Also:

[Chart: A Collection of Attitudes](#)

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS / [9:35-41](#) / [150](#)

Unless we have suffered rejection for our faith, we may not be able to identify with the state of this blind man whom Jesus healed. In a single day he went from being a disabled outcast to a celebrity who had miraculously received his sight, then to being a witness in court where he was treated like a criminal, and finally to being outcast again (literally) for simply telling the truth as he clearly saw it.

At this point, Jesus intervened again. He found the man, faced him, and asked a question that would uncover whether or not this man was ready to receive complete vision. The man's understanding of the one who had healed him had already expanded considerably. Here was his chance to really see Jesus.

In the background of the man's willing trust and worship we hear the Pharisees mumbling, incensed that Jesus was unwilling to recognize their spiritual stature. Instead, Jesus diagnosed their problem as ongoing profound blindness coupled with guilt.

[9:35-38](#) After the man was thrown out of the synagogue, Jesus found him and asked him, "**Do you believe in the Son of Man?**"^{NIV} This is the reading in all the earliest manuscripts; later manuscripts read, "the Son of God." Since *Son of Man* is a title of the Christ, Jesus was asking the man if he believed him to be the Messiah. Perhaps the man instantly recognized Jesus by his voice. He expressed immediate desire to believe, which here means not intellectual recognition, but wholehearted trust.

LIFE APPLICATION

20/20 VISION

The longer this man experienced his new life through Christ, the more confident he became in the one who had healed him. He gained not only physical sight but also spiritual sight as he recognized Jesus first as a prophet ([9:17](#)), then as his Lord. When you turn to Christ, you begin to see him differently. The longer you walk with him, the better you will understand who he is. Peter tells us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" ([2 Peter 3:18](#) NIV). If you want to know more about Jesus, keep walking with him.

When the man asked who the Son of Man was, Jesus responded, "**You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.**"^{NIV} The words *you have now seen him* have double impact—the man could physically see Jesus with his healed eyes, and he could spiritually see because he understood that Jesus was the Messiah.

"Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.^{NIV} The man acted on his newfound belief—he worshiped. He may have just been excommunicated from the synagogue, but he had found true worship. His personal belief is the culmination of the narrative. His belief sharply contrasts with the blindness of the religious leaders ([9:40-41](#)).

[9:39-41](#) Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment."^{NRSV} Do Jesus' words here contradict his statement in [3:17](#): "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world" (NKJV)? Jesus did not execute judgment during his years on earth, although he would do that in the future. However, his words here reveal that, as the Light of the World, he sees and reveals people's innermost thoughts and deepest motives. In so doing, he "judges" or separates those who claim to have great spiritual knowledge when in fact they are blind, from those who humbly seek to follow God and who thus find the Savior.

LIFE APPLICATION

ULTIMATE ADVENTURE!

[John 9](#) would make a wonderful script for a play or movie. The innocent hero, a disabled victim, is expelled from his home and lives on the periphery of society. Religious people suspect his parents committed some heinous sin, possibly before he was even born!

Into our victim/hero's life steps a remarkable stranger who heals his blindness. The blind man is asked to wash off some miracle mud and loses track of the one who gave him his sight. Strangely, no one recognizes the miracle that has happened to him or shares in his joy. Instead, they treat him as if he has contracted a new disease! Even his parents maintain their distance. Finally, as he explains over and over what happened and what he thinks about the man who healed him, he finds himself thrown into the street. It is only then that he finally meets Jesus face-to-face and believes.

By relating this incident John prepares those who follow Jesus to expect opposition from unbelievers—even religious unbelievers. The trials of those who trust Jesus are real. The backlash and rejection can take financial, familial, social and religious forms. It takes courage and conviction to keep on following Christ. "Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me" ([Psalm 27:10](#) NIV).

"So that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind."^{NRSV} Christ spoke these words to the healed man in the presence of the Pharisees. *Those who do not see* are those who realize their need for the Savior and humbly come to him for salvation. They will see. But *those who do see* are the self-

righteous who think they have all the answers and have no need of the Savior. They *become blind* because they have rejected the "light of the world" ([8:12](#)).

The Pharisees quickly understood that Jesus had directed this statement toward them, but they were not fully sure of the meaning of his words, so they asked, "**Surely we are not blind, are we?**"^{NRSV} They assumed that with their learning, reputation, and high standing, they certainly would not be counted among the "blind."

Most high, glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of
my heart and give me,
Lord, a correct faith, a
certain hope, a perfect
charity, sense, and
knowledge, so that I may
carry out your holy and
true command.

Francis of Assisi

Jesus expanded his statement with the rather cryptic condemnation: "**If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.**"^{NIV} In contrast to the man who had received his sight, the Pharisees had sight but no light. They were spiritually blind, though they claimed to see. Those who admitted blindness could receive the light and see, but those who thought they saw would remain in their darkness. And their guilt remained, whether they felt guilty or not.

LIFE APPLICATION

CHOOSING BLINDNESS

The Pharisees were shocked that Jesus thought they were spiritually blind. Jesus countered by saying that it was only blindness (stubbornness and stupidity) that could excuse their behavior. To those who remained open and recognized how sin had truly blinded them from knowing the truth, Jesus gave spiritual understanding and insight. But he rejected those who had become complacent, self-satisfied, and "blind."

Spiritual darkness describes the worst form of judgment. The Light of the World, Jesus, gives us a glimmer of hope. All of us need to follow the Light given to us. Otherwise we are left with nothing but our blind judgment and self-darkening opinions.

**Life-Sharing Series From Triage To Transformation Lesson 4 The Recovery
John 9 :1-41**

1. Can you recall an event that happened to you, in which you were convinced of a truth even when others tried to persuade you otherwise? You knew what you knew because of your first hand experience.

As a ten year old, I had two white boys come to my defense when I had been called a nigger in front of a group of all white sixth and fifth grade boys. I had been told by the boy who owned the football, "ain't no nigger gonna touch my ball." Those two boys said, "if he can't touch your ball, neither can we. They walked away with me. At the height of the civil rights movement when the Black Panthers and Black Muslims were speaking as though all white people were evil and of the devil, I could not believe it. The two actions of those little white boys had changed my views forever.

2. You may not be able to quote a lot of passages in the bible or where they are located, but you can say, "I know this is what Jesus did for me." Why is this important for every believer to remember?

We all have a testimony of what God did for us. Sometimes simply giving our testimony is enough to impact a person's life. We do not recognize how similar our circumstances may be to someone else's who is just looking to hear of a chance for help.

1 Peter 3:14-15 (NIV)

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." ¹⁵ But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

John 9:1-41 (NIV)

¹ As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. ⁴ As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

⁶ Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.

⁷ "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. ⁸ His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man."

¹⁰ "How then were your eyes opened?" they demanded. ¹¹ He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see."

¹² "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said. ¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind.

¹⁴ Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵ Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see." ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided.

¹⁷ Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet."

¹⁸ The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. ¹⁹ "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" ²⁰ "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. ²¹ But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself."

²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

²⁴ A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." ²⁵ He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" ²⁶ Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷ He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" ²⁸ Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses!

²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from." ³⁰ The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. ³² Nobody has ever heard of

opening the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." ³⁴ To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶ "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." ³⁷ Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." ³⁸ Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. ³⁹ Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." ⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?"

⁴¹ Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

3. Do we really believe that we are in the condition we are in so that the works of God may be displayed in us? What kind of works might God be wanting to display in us?

Often we do not see our circumstances as something God is seeking to be glorified in. We are often too busy trying to pray our way out of the situation. We don't often see suffering as a chance to glorify God, especially when we are being mistreated. Yet we find in this passage these words: 1 Peter 4:12-16 (NIV)

¹² Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

4. How would you have felt if you had been the blind man listening to the conversation between Jesus and the disciples?

I think I would have been disappointed and upset. Just because I was blind didn't mean that I couldn't hear. I was being talked about and being judged and yet these people in front of me did not know my situation. If they wanted to help me, then go ahead and help me, but if all they wanted was to talk about me, then they could have kept on moving.

5. Why do you think Jesus did not just heal the man with words instead of going through the mud and saliva?

Jesus often used different actions to bring about more than one point. By turning the dirt into mud, he was breaking the Sabbath by doing work. He wanted to show, this man's life was more important than the rules of the Pharisees and Sadducees. He also wanted to have the man have a role in the healing process. He gave the man a specific job of going to the Pool to wash his eyes. The man had a chance to have his faith grow in the process.

6. If you notice the passage closely, Jesus did not guarantee the man a healing. He simply gave him steps to follow. Do you think our healings are ever tied into our obedience to what God has told us to do? Why or Why not?

I think they are. A lot of times we miss out on God's plans for our lives simply because of our disobedience. There are things that God wants to give us, but our disobedience cut them out of our lives. After David had sinned by committing adultery with Bathsheba and having her husband killed, Nathan the prophet told him 2 Samuel 12:7-8 (NIV) ⁷ Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul.' ⁸ I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. ***From this point forward, David's life takes a downward spiral from which he never recovers. There are healings that we miss out on simply because we do not turn to God. The prophet Jonah puts it this way Jonah 2:8 (NIV)*** ⁸ "Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.

7. Why do you think the man was eager to speak up to his neighbors to let them know he was the man who had been born blind?

The man knew he had been healed and he was eager to let the world know that God had blessed him and that he was no longer the man he used to be. He had some good news and he wanted to share it with anyone who would listen.

8. Why could the Pharisees see the Sabbath breaking, but not the miracle of the eyes being healed?

We often see in a situation what we want to see. They had made up their mind about Jesus, so anything he did was going to be colored by what they thought about him. We often do the same thing with people who do good things, but we don't like. We give them motives for things they do, that may be completely wrong on our part.

9. How do we sometimes allow our traditions keep us from seeing a fresh move of God?

We do it by refusing to rethink what we are doing and why we are doing it. If we do what we always did, that does not mean God will always be a part of it. We can insist that worship be done in a certain way, with a certain time limit, on a certain day, in a certain order, with a certain group of people leading it, and because of it, we miss out on what God is doing. Churches are expanding their ministry by using video teaching and preaching. Some people thought this would never work, so they refused to even consider it. Yet other churches are growing abundantly doing it.

We can also want to control ministries in such a way that others do not have the opportunity to use their gifts and talents. Why limit the number of choirs in a church or the number of bible studies if there are people available to make them happen.

10. How would you have felt if you were the parents of the man who had been healed being forced to make a choice between your son and your standing in the religious community?

I certainly would have felt robbed and cheated. Robbed of the opportunity to celebrate an obvious miracle with my child. Yet cheated in that, I would find myself ostracized from all my other family and friends if I thanked God for what had taken place.

11. What do you think the man could have possibly have said that would have satisfied the Pharisees request that he give glory to God by telling the truth?

Absolutely nothing. The Pharisees had already made up their minds. It was going to be their truth or no truth.

12. When is it that facts will not be enough to convince a person of the truth?

If a person is emotionally tied to their version of the facts, the truth is not going to matter. They will simply reinterpret the facts to make them fit their version of truth. You cannot convince a person who is not open to consider the possibility that he or she may not be right.

13. Why do the leaders get upset over the man's teachings about God?

They thought the man had stepped out of place by trying to teach them about God. He had insulted their intellectual pride. It was their job to teach, and his job was to follow their teachings. They consider themselves morally superior to this man in every way, after all they claim he was steeped in sin from birth. They held to the view it was because of his sin that he had been born blind as opposed to Jesus' view that the blindness was due to the glory of God being lifted up.

14. Why do you think Jesus went searching for the man after the Pharisees had thrown him out?

Jesus knew this man was battered and discouraged. He wanted to offer him encouragement and he wanted to reveal who He was to the man. He also wanted

to teach the Pharisees a new truth about Himself. He could only offer sight to those who were willing to see. Anyone that refused his sight, would remain in darkness.

15. How do we know that Jesus is God from this passage?

Jesus not only healed the man. Jesus received worship from the man. John 9:38 (NIV) ³⁸ ***Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. Only God is allowed to be worshipped in the Scriptures. No matter how God uses us, we are forbidden from receiving worship from others.***

16. Who do you think would find Jesus' final words to be offensive today?

John 9:41 (NIV) ⁴¹ ***Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."***

Jesus' words would be offensive to anyone who was sinning and did not want to call their behavior sin.

17. Did this man healed of blindness leave Jesus well.

Yes. Of all the characters we have looked at, this man leaves doing exactly what Jesus required of him.

Life-Sharing Series From Triage To Transformation Lesson 5 The Discharge Acts 9:1-22

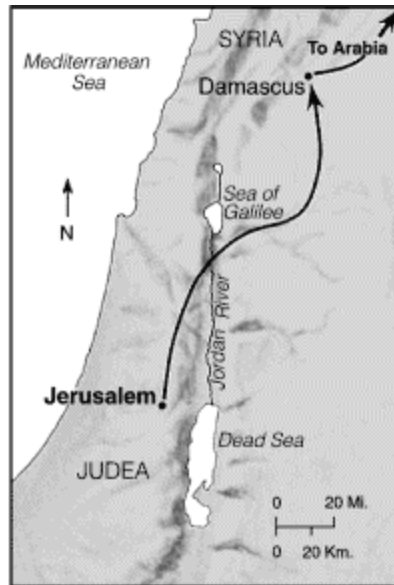
SAUL'S CONVERSION / 9:1-19A

[Acts 1:8](#) seems to be a concise outline for the entire book. [Chapters 1–7](#) describe the gospel being preached in Jerusalem. [Chapter 8](#) shows believers, under threat of persecution, taking the good news of Jesus to Judea and Samaria.

[Chapter 9](#)

records a monumental event in the history of the church—the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Saul (later known as Paul) would be God's apostle to the Gentiles ([Galatians 2:8](#); [Ephesians 3:8](#)).

He would lead the church in spreading Christianity "to the ends of the earth" ([1:8](#)). Therefore Paul, more than any other person, figures prominently in [chapters 10–28](#). No one was better suited to the task than Paul: a "real Jew if there ever was one" ([Philippians 3:5](#)



Saul Travels to Damascus

Many Christians fled Jerusalem when persecution began after Stephen's death, seeking refuge in other cities and countries. Saul tracked them down, even traveling 150 miles to Damascus in Syria to bring Christians back in chains to Jerusalem. But as he neared the ancient city, he discovered that God had other plans for him.

NLT; see also
Galatians [1:14](#));
a native of
Tarsus
thoroughly
acquainted with
Greek culture
([17:22-31](#)); a
citizen of Rome
([16:37](#));

trained in a trade so that he could support himself ([18:3](#)) as he traveled and ministered.

Before Christ could use this highly gifted man, however, he first had to transform him. Little did Saul know what lay ahead for him on the road to Damascus!

[9:1-2](#) Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath. He was eager to destroy the Lord's followers, so he went to the high priest. He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.^{NLT} *Saul* (later called Paul, the equivalent of "Saul" in Greek), first mentioned as a participant in the stoning of Stephen (see [7:58](#); [8:1](#)), was so zealous for his Jewish beliefs that he began a persecution campaign against all who believed in Christ, all who were *followers of the Way* (see Paul's testimony in [Philippians 3:6](#)). This name implied "the way of the Lord" or "the way of salvation." Christ had earlier claimed to be "the way" ([John 14:6](#)). This designation is found a number of times in Acts ([19:9](#), [23](#); [22:4](#); [24:14](#), [22](#); see also [16:17](#); [18:25-26](#)).

LIFE APPLICATION

GOD'S WAY

As Saul traveled to Damascus, pursuing Christians, he was confronted by the risen Christ and brought face-to-face with the truth of the gospel. Sometimes God breaks into a life in a spectacular manner, and sometimes conversion is a quiet experience. Beware of people who insist that you must have a particular type of conversion experience. The right way to come to faith in Jesus is whatever way God brings *you*.

Why would the Jews in Jerusalem want to persecute Christians as far away as Damascus? There are several possibilities: (1) to seize the Christians who had fled; (2)

to prevent the spread of Christianity to other major cities; and (3) to keep the Christians from causing any trouble with Rome.

The *letters* requested by Saul would not only introduce him, but they would provide him with the high priest's authorization to seize followers of Christ and bring them *back to Jerusalem*. Most synagogues in Syria probably recognized this right of extradition. Not only was Saul going to pursue them, he also was going to arrest *both men and women* and bring them back *in chains*.

9:3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.^{NKJV} Damascus, a key commercial city, was located about 175 miles northeast of Jerusalem in the Roman province of Syria. Several trade routes linked Damascus to other cities throughout the Roman world. Damascus was one of the ten cities known as the Decapolis (see [Mark 5:20](#); [7:31](#)). Saul may have thought that by stamping out Christianity in Damascus, he could prevent its spread to other areas.

Nearing his destination, at about noon, when the sun was at its full height (see [22:6](#); [26:13](#)), Saul suddenly found himself awash in a brilliant heavenly *light*. Though the text does not overtly state that Saul saw Christ, that fact is implied, since seeing the resurrected Lord was a requirement of New Testament apostleship (see [1 Corinthians 9:1](#); [15:8](#)). Also, the testimonies of Ananias ([9:17](#)) and Barnabas ([9:27](#)) confirm an eyewitness encounter.

9:4-5 He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."^{NRSV}

Not only did Saul witness the brilliant glory of the Lord, but he also *heard* the voice of Jesus Christ. (For the rest of what Jesus said, see [22:8](#), [10](#), [17](#), [21](#); [26:15-18](#).) Saul thought he was pursuing heretics, but according

Whoever sees Christ as a mirror of the Father's heart, actually walks through the world with new eyes.
Martin Luther

to the voice, his actions were tantamount to attacking Jesus himself—*I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting*. Anyone who persecutes believers today is also guilty of persecuting Jesus (see [Matthew 25:40](#), [45](#)) because believers are the body of Christ on earth. This is a powerful statement about the union that exists between Christ and his church.

As he lay there in the dust, Saul must have been reeling from the realization that Jesus, the crucified founder of this detested sect, had been resurrected by God and exalted in divine glory. Saul was not serving God, as he had thought, but opposing him!

LIFE APPLICATION

RELIGION VS. RELATIONSHIP

Paul referred to his encounter on the road to Damascus as the start of his new life in Christ ([1 Corinthians 9:1](#); [15:8](#); [Galatians 1:15-16](#)). At the center of this wonderful experience was Jesus Christ. Paul did not see a vision; he saw the risen Christ himself ([9:17](#)). Paul did not "get religion" (he was already a very religious man!); he found a relationship with Jesus. Paul acknowledged Jesus as Lord, confessed his own sin, surrendered his life to Christ, and resolved to obey him. True conversion comes from a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and leads to a new life in relationship with him.

9:6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you are to do."^{NLT} According to Paul's own testimony in [26:16-18](#), Christ gave him, at this moment, a brief preview of his future as an apostle to the Gentiles. Further details would come once he made his way into the city of Damascus.

9:7 The men with Saul stood speechless with surprise, for they heard the sound of someone's voice, but they saw no one!^{NLT} Those accompanying Saul heard *the sound of someone's voice* and saw some kind of light (see [22:9](#)), but they didn't understand the full significance of this encounter. *They saw no one*, nor had they heard the specific words spoken to Saul ([26:14](#)).

9:8-9 As Saul picked himself up off the ground, he found that he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. He remained there blind for three days. And all that time he went without food and water.^{NLT}

Saul was temporarily blinded by this revelation (an event with Old Testament precedence—see [Genesis 19:11](#); [2 Kings 6:17-20](#)), so *his companions led him by the hand to Damascus*. Saul's subsequent fast (going *without food and water*) was most likely motivated by shock as

If you have to be reasoned into Christianity, some wise fellow can reason you out of it. But if you come to Christ by a flash of the Holy Ghost . . . no one can ever reason you out of it.

A. W. Tozer

he tried to ponder the full significance of his experience. Typically, fasting indicated a period of mourning or repentance.

LIFE APPLICATION

A CHANGED LIFE

Saul's conversion was undeniable:

- He went storming out of Jerusalem in a huff; he came stumbling into Damascus in humility ([9:8-9](#)).
- He went to arrest Christians; he ended up being arrested by Christ ([9:1-5](#)).
- He began the trip determined to wipe out the message of Christ; he ended the trip devoted to the cause of taking that message to the ends of the earth ([9:19-22](#)).
- He went from being a persecutor to being a persecuted one ([9:23-25](#)).

In short, Saul's whole mind-set and belief system were turned upside down. He realized that Christ was not dead, but alive. Christ was not merely a Nazarene rabble-rouser; he was the Messiah, the Son of God.

Saul certainly had a lot to think about during those *three days*. He realized that despite his zeal for God, his recent activity of arresting Christians had been in direct opposition to God—otherwise, he would not have received this rebuke. The voice from heaven had told him that in persecuting the Christians, he was persecuting this one named Jesus, who, Saul realized, was associated with God, because of the heavenly light and glory he had seen. Saul then would have been forced to realize that Jesus was indeed the Messiah for whom the Jews were still waiting—the Messiah who had come and gone, murdered by Saul's own contemporaries. Saul probably would have begun to think about the many prophecies that he had studied in his training as a Pharisee, prophecies that spoke of the coming Messiah. He would have been forced to conclude that Jesus had indeed met the requirements and fulfilled the prophecies. These Christians, whom Saul had been chasing, believed that Jesus had risen from the dead—and Saul had just seen the risen Christ in his glory. Suddenly, all that Saul had believed was being torn down and replaced with a new truth—the very truth that he had been seeking to extinguish. As Saul was thinking about all this, he was also praying ([9:11](#)).

[9:10](#) Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord."^{NRSV} As Saul waited for further directions, the Lord began speaking to *Ananias*, "a godly man in his devotion to the law [who] was well thought of by all the Jews of Damascus" ([22:12](#) NLT). Ananias, a Jew, had become a believer in Christ—a *disciple*. Ananias responded to the call of God with the same words of submission uttered by his forefathers, Abraham ([Genesis 22:1](#)), Jacob ([Genesis 31:11](#)), Moses ([Exodus 3:10](#)), and Samuel ([1 Samuel 3:10](#)): "Here I am, Lord."

LIFE APPLICATION

GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

Given Saul's selection as a key person in the vast program of God, we might think that Peter or one of the other apostles should have been chosen to minister to this important new convert. Not so. God called an unknown disciple named Ananias for this task. This has been true throughout church history. Consider this list of "nobodies":

- John Staupitz: The man who helped lead Martin Luther to Christ.
- John Eggen: Instrumental in the conversion of C. H. Spurgeon.
- Edward Kimball: Just a shoe salesman . . . who happened to be D. L. Moody's spiritual mentor.
- Mordecai Ham: A little-known evangelist who preached the night that Billy Graham yielded his life to Christ.

We never know how God might use us to touch a life that will, in turn, touch millions. Yield yourself to the purposes of God, and be faithful when he calls.

9:11-12 The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you arrive, ask for Saul of Tarsus.

He is praying to me right now. I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him so that he can see again.^{NLT}

Prayer is the autograph of the Holy Ghost upon the renewed heart.

Charles H. Spurgeon

The meeting between Saul and Ananias was divinely arranged. The Lord gave specific instructions to Ananias about where to go and for whom to look; in a separate vision, he told Saul to expect Ananias's arrival. Such divine revelation with separate individuals having similar visions would be repeated again in [10:1-23](#).

Straight Street was and still is one of the main thoroughfares of Damascus. Ananias was directed to the street and *to the house of Judas*. Somehow God had led those in Paul's entourage to take him to this particular house; then God prepared his other servant to meet Saul. Ananias had been chosen to be the instrument of healing and help to the new convert.

9:13-14 "But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! And we hear that he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest every believer in Damascus."^{NLT} Ananias was understandably shaken by the Lord's command to go and find Saul of Tarsus. Christians wanted to stay far away from Saul. His reputation as an enemy of the church was well documented, and the intent of this particular mission to Damascus was widely known. Ananias knew that Saul had been *authorized by the leading priests*

to arrest every believer in Damascus. Fearful of what might happen, Ananias began to protest, "But Lord . . . I've heard about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem!" The ultimate measure of faith is how believers respond to commands that seem illogical (see [Exodus 14:16](#); [1 Kings 17:3-14](#); [2 Kings 5:10](#); [John 9:1-11](#)). Despite his protests, however, Ananias was up to the task.

LIFE APPLICATION

MISSION "IMPOSSIBLE"

"Not him, Lord; that's impossible. Saul would *never* become a Christian!" In essence, that's what Ananias said when God told him of Saul's conversion. After all, Saul was persecuting believers to their deaths. Despite these understandable feelings, Ananias obeyed God and ministered to Saul. We must not limit God—he can do anything. Nothing is too hard for him ([Genesis 18:14](#)). We must obey and follow God's leading, even when he leads us to difficult people and places.

[9:15-16](#) But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."^{NIV} Ananias's protest was met with a divine statement that Saul was God's *chosen instrument*. What irony that the most zealous Jew and most anti-Gentile would be the chosen witness to the Gentiles. The literal translation of the Greek word *skeuos* is "vessel, jar, or dish." It pictures an object that can contain, carry, and convey something else. In short, the Christian-hater from Tarsus had been handpicked by God to *carry* the *name* and message of Christ *before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel*. For the rest of his life, Saul marveled that he would be the recipient of such mercy and grace, as well as be the appointee for such a noble task. Saul, who had caused horrible suffering for so many Christians, would find that he, too, *must suffer*. The remainder of the book of Acts and the many letters that Saul wrote that are included in the New Testament chronicle the words of this verse: Saul would find himself witnessing for Christ in front of Gentile audiences, Jewish audiences, and even kings. He also would suffer severely for his faith.

LIFE APPLICATION

THE SNOWFLAKE PRINCIPLE

Saul was perfect for the task given him by God: thoroughly versed in Jewish theology, language, and culture; a native of Tarsus and, thus, equally at home in Greek culture; a citizen of the Roman Empire; trained in the secular trade of tentmaking, thus able to support himself financially. This is a great example of the truth that God has a tailor-made ministry for each Christian. It's the snowflake principle. We're all different. No one else would have been suited to do what Paul did. And no one else can do what you can do. No one else has your circle of friends, your abilities, your situations. In a sense, each believer has an apostolic call. God wants to send you out, to commission you to do something significant. You may not play a prominent or highly visible role, but God has a fulfilling plan for you that will bring him glory by building his church.

9:17 So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."^{NRSV}

Ananias's actions fulfilled at least two purposes. First, he functioned almost in a prophetic role, serving as God's confirming mouthpiece in the commissioning of the great apostle—*the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you . . . has sent me*. Second, his visit served as a ministry of personal encouragement. Saul must have been encouraged when he heard Ananias greet him as *Brother*. God had told Ananias to go to Saul and lay his hands on him "so that he can see again" (9:12 NLT). So when Ananias arrived, he told Saul that Jesus had sent him so that Saul could *regain his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit*. Although there is no mention of a special and dramatic filling of the Holy Spirit for Saul (such as occurred for the twelve apostles), his changed life and subsequent accomplishments bear strong witness to the Holy Spirit's presence and power in his life. Evidently, the Holy Spirit filled Saul when he received his sight and was baptized.

LIFE APPLICATION

TAKING RISKS

Ananias found Saul, as he had been instructed, and greeted him as "Brother Saul." Ananias feared this meeting because he knew that Saul had come to Damascus to capture believers and take them as prisoners to Jerusalem (9:2, 14). In obedience to the Holy Spirit, however, Ananias greeted Saul with love. It is not always easy to show acceptance to others, especially when we are afraid of them or doubt their motives. Nevertheless, we must follow Jesus' command (John 13:34) and Ananias's example,

demonstrating genuine warmth and kindness to other believers.

9:18-19a Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. Afterward he ate some food and was strengthened.^{NLT} Upon the conclusion of this experience, *something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight.* Saul was baptized, presumably by Ananias, and he ended his three-day fast (9:9). Following this encounter, nothing more is known about Ananias. Because this faithful man was willing to go where God sent him, he was used by God to prepare a man who would evangelize most of the known world and write a significant portion of the New Testament.

SAUL IN DAMASCUS AND JERUSALEM / 9:19B-31

The change in Saul was instantaneous. In less than one week, he went from being eager to destroy the Lord's followers (9:1) to preaching about Jesus in the synagogues (9:20). The believers were understandably suspicious, but Saul's powerful and persistent preaching, coupled with efforts by the Jewish leaders to kill him (9:23), finally convinced the apostles that his conversion was genuine. According to [Galatians 1:17-18](#), Saul spent three years in Arabia between the time of his conversion (9:3-6) and his journey to Jerusalem (9:26).

According to Luke, following Saul's acceptance by the apostles, the church enjoyed another growth spurt and a time of peace.

9:19b-20 Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.^{NIV} Saul obeyed his new calling immediately, for *at once he began to preach.* As would become his lifelong pattern, Saul went first to the *synagogues* so that he might preach the truth about Jesus to his Jewish kinsmen. His message, in summary, was *that Jesus is the Son of God.* This is the only time the phrase "Son of God" is used in the book of Acts ([Acts 8:37](#) is not part of the original text of Acts). Describing Jesus as the "Son of God" had three implications: (1) it spoke of Jesus' intimate and unique relationship with God the Father; (2) it placed Jesus in the kingly line of David; (3) it identified Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah of Israel ([Matthew 26:63](#); [Mark 14:61](#); [Luke 22:67-70](#)). Saul could do this so soon after his conversion because his experience on the road to Damascus had been unmistakable. Saul knew that Jesus was alive, that Jesus was God's Son, and that Jesus was the Messiah.

LIFE APPLICATION

TELLING YOUR STORY

Immediately after receiving his sight and spending some time with the believers in Damascus, Saul went to the synagogue to tell the Jews about Christ. Some Christians counsel new believers to wait until they are thoroughly grounded in their faith before attempting to share the gospel. Notice that Saul took time alone to learn about Jesus before beginning his worldwide ministry, but he did not wait to witness. Although we should not rush into a ministry unprepared, we do not need to wait before telling others the story of our encounter with Christ.

9:21 All who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem among those who invoked this name? And has he not come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?"^{NRSV} The change in Saul caused his hearers to be *amazed*. They had expected Saul to show up and begin arresting followers of Jesus, for that was how he had *made havoc in Jerusalem* among the Christians. They also knew why he had come to Damascus in the first place—to bring Christians back to Jerusalem *bound before the chief priests*. Yet here was this enemy of Christianity preaching the Christian message! Surely these Jews made this information known to their leaders back in Jerusalem ([9:23](#)).

LIFE APPLICATION

THE BEST ARGUMENT

Saul's arguments for Christ were powerful because he was a brilliant scholar. But what made his gospel presentation even more convincing was his transformed life. People knew that what Saul taught was real because they could see the evidence in the way he lived. It is important to know what the Bible teaches and how to defend the faith, but be sure your words are backed up with your new life.

9:22 Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.^{NIV} The Jews were *baffled* (literally, "thrown into consternation, confounded") by Saul's *powerful* preaching. His words were filled with power as he continued *proving that Jesus is the Christ*. The verb "prove" as used here means "to put together." Essentially, what Saul was doing was taking Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah and putting them together with the facts of Jesus' life, thus proving to *the Jews living in Damascus* that Jesus was the one to whom the Scriptures pointed.

Life-Sharing Series From Triage To Transformation Lesson 5 The Discharge Acts 9:1-22

1. What does it feel like to be released from the hospital? What kind of thoughts occupy your mind?

It feels good to know that you're going back home again. You feel as though the worst of the sickness is behind you. You think that now you can go on and resume your life as it was before. You at least know you've been helped.

2. Each week we are discharged from church. What do you think God expects to happen as we are released back into the world?

I think God expects us to demonstrate His grace and mercy first and foremost to those we encounter on a regular basis, especially those we live with. If the people in our homes are not convinced that we are Christians, then maybe we are not living the way God is calling us to live. God's love is to be shown to everyone, but it should start with those closest to us. We are released to make a positive difference for Christ, even though that difference may be small in our own eyes. We don't know how God will multiply the effect of the difference for God's glory.

Acts 9:1-22 (NIV)

¹ Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." ⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. ¹¹ The Lord told him, "Go to the house of

Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."¹³ "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem."¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel."¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord--Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here--has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized,¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.²¹ All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?"²² Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

3. How does Paul go from radical persecution of Christians to being their number one supporter in 3 days?

Paul had a personal encounter with Jesus, and Paul knew that what he had experienced was real. His contact with Jesus convinced him that he needed to change the direction of his life.

4. What do you think would have been going through your head if you had been Saul and discovered you were persecuting Jesus who obviously has some power that caused him to fall to the ground?

I would have been scared out of my wits. I would have thought I was about to be judged and punished for the wrong I had been doing. The last thing I would have expected to receive from Jesus would have been an invitation to join his team.

5. How would you have felt when you could no longer see? What do you think would have been your initial reaction to your blindness?

I think I would have been an emotional wreck. I would have been scared. Here I am in a city without family, and I needed help more than ever. I would have thought the blindness was my punishment for what I had done wrong. I probably would have been trying to bargain with God over restoring my sight by repenting and making all kinds of promises of what I would do if I got my sight back.

6. Why was it hard for Ananias to want to pray for Saul?

Ananias thought that Saul's blindness was an answer to the prayers he had been praying, that God would make it difficult for Saul to capture believers and have them sent to Jerusalem. From his perspective, Saul's blindness was one of the best thing that could have ever happened to the church. Ananias saw Saul for what he was in life, not for what he could be in the body of Christ.

7. Have there been times when you did not want God to do something good for someone else because of what they had done to you or to others? How does a Christian deal with these feelings?

Yes I struggle with those feelings even now. I get upset with our Presidents full out support for the agenda of the homosexual movement, yet his complete silence over people who are discriminated against simply because they support traditional marriage of a man and a woman. I struggle with the need to forgive him and let it go knowing that God may have a greater plan in mind than I can see. It may be that God is sending persecution to purify the church, whereas I'm desiring what seems to make Christians more safe.

8. What was it that Saul had that the other disciples especially the 11 from Jesus did not have to bring to the kingdom of God?

Saul was educated, he was a Roman citizen, he was a Pharisee, and he was a trained debater. He knew Greek, Roman, and Jewish culture. It was easier for Saul to enter into some arenas than it was for the other 11 disciples. Paul had a reputation that was known for being committed to God as a Pharisee. His opinion carried weight in the minds of those who were impressed by the world's credentials. Paul used those credentials to preach the gospel in various settings, but he always knew that those credentials did not add anything to his salvation. His trust remained in Jesus alone.

9. Does God ever choose us for a particular mission, because we have a certain talent, gift or education level?

I think God is always crafting us for some particular purpose. But we have to be open to the Spirit of God, because sometimes God calls us to completely leave behind all the things we have in our favor to follow Him to something entirely new. Other times God calls us to make a difference in the setting or arena we are already a part of. God knows that for some of us, we have to be completely moved out of an area, because the temptations are there to suck us back into it. Everything that we have should be seen as a potential tool for the kingdom of God. That does not mean that God will choose to use all that we have in the kingdom.

10. When God calls Saul, God plans for suffering to be a painful part of Saul's mission? How does this fit with the gospel of prosperity that says "if you follow Jesus, your faith can keep pain and suffering out of your life?"

Too often we have substituted the gospel of Jesus Christ with the search for the American Dream. Being a successful Christian is almost the same as being a happy middle class American. Jesus makes it clear that suffering for his sake is to be a part of the life of every believer. Yet we try to avoid suffering on every level, even to the point of compromising the gospel. Having enough faith does not mean, you get what you want. It means knowing that whatever you receive, God is still on the throne and is still at work in your life.

11. Why do you think Ananias calls Saul "Brother Saul" when he places his hand on Saul?

Ananias wanted to offer some encouragement to Saul. He wanted him to know that Jesus had accepted him into the family, and he was willing to accept him as

well. Ananias is the first Christian to encounter Saul since his conversion experience. Saul had to be wondering what the other Christians would think of him after all that he had done to other believers.

12. Ananias prayed that Saul would receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Is it strange that Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit but there is no mention of Paul speaking in tongues?

No. Not everyone who is filled with Spirit begins speaking in tongues. We look at a few examples in the bible of something happening to a person, and we assume that everyone is to have that experience. No one teaches, that in order to be saved, you must first be blinded for 3 days by Jesus. In Acts 16 when the Philippian Jailer and his family come to know Christ, there is no mention that they all spoke in tongues as Corneilus and his family had done in Acts 10.

13. Why do you think Saul immediately started to preach in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son Of God?

I think Saul wanted to make up for lost time. He was excited about his new found faith and he wanted the world to know about Jesus. He especially wanted the Jews to know that their Messiah had come.

14. Why do you think it was hard for those opposing Saul to challenge his message?

First they knew that Paul was a Pharisee and a scholar. He knew the Scriptures and undoubtedly was using them in his presentation. Second they knew that he had persecuted Christians because of their faith in Jesus. Something dramatic had to have taken place to get Paul to change his position on Jesus. Third, they knew he was willing to risk his reputation for the cause of Jesus Christ. What did he know about Jesus that they did not know, probably intrigued them in their thinking.

15. What do you think were some of the things Saul used to prove that Jesus was the Messiah?

I think Paul went straight to Isaiah 53 to compare the details of Jesus's life to that of the suffering servant in the Scriptures. Isaiah 53:1-12 (NIV)

¹ Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

² He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. ⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. ¹¹ After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

¹² Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

I think Paul emphasized the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that not only had others seen Jesus, he had seen Jesus for himself on the Damascus road.

16. When Saul left Ananias, do you think he had been made well? Why

Yes-he left with a mission to make a difference for the cause of Christ. It was no longer about him, it was all about Jesus.